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[THE TRAMP.]

LADY JULIETTE'S SECRET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Grand Court," "The Rose of Kemdale," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

The waves go by till my eyes are weary,
They will not tarry, nor turn again:
Life, new life, is their chorus cheery,
"That strange, new life, in the dark, blue main."
My days go by, till I stand despairing,
For those were evil, and these are vain;
Yet hope, my heart! for the time is nearing
When I may try my life again.

THE heat had been intense, the fiery god of day had just gone down behind the western woodlands, the heavens were yet aglow with the gorgeous tints which had painted the skies during sunset, but the glorious colours were fast fading into more delicate, and yet lovelier tints.

A young man sat under the porch of an old-fashioned rustic cottage. He rested his elbows on a small table, whereon were strewn books, and pens, and manuscript papers. His cheek rested on his hands. It was the dreamy, listless attitude of one who either regrets the past, or forms vague aspirations for the future. It was not the pose of one who "Acts, acts in the living present," "Trusts no future," and "Lets the dead past bury its dead."

There was a hopeless want of energy in the fashion wherewith the new acquaintance whom we are about to introduce to the reader fingered his pencil. When he took his hand away from supporting his head, and, leaning backwards against the porch, seemed to deliver himself up to reverie, he could watch the fading of the sunset colours from where he sat—he could see the village, the church spire, and the gables of a certain picturesque house of gray stone, covered with ivy.

He saw all these picturesque objects, however, as if he saw them not, for his restless soul was not looking through his eyes, it was plunged in a dark sea of regrets, half-formed aspirations, and bitter self-communings.

The sober evening tints stole gradually across the heavens like sombre, stealthy giants. Soon they had blotted out all the brightness, and then arrived another brightness more solemn, more tender, more mysterious.

The large, yellow moon came and hung low in the sky, just above that gray stone house, with its clothing of ivy leaves. A very faint breeze arose, stirring the flowers and shrubs in the old-fashioned garden, and a delicious perfume was wafted in the air.

Suddenly the young man who had seemed so idle and fond of ease, threw down his pencil, almost fiercely, and came out into the garden. He walked, or rather dashed down, to the gate, for his movements had all the impetuosity of a wild animal. When he was roused to action also, they had all a wild animal's grace, agility and carelessness. He leaned over the gate, drew a cigar from his pocket, lighted it, and then began to smoke. Soon he dropped again into a dreamy, listless, idle attitude. He leaned luxuriously even upon the wooden rail of the gate, and threw something of independence and languor into his pose.

Presently came a step in the distance; it approached nearer; and then a dark figure loomed between the young man and the moonlight. The figure came close to the gate and stopped short.

"Good evening, Mr. Fernandez," said the newcomer, pleasantly.

Whereupon Mr. Fernandez drew his cigar from his mouth, and answered in a dulcet, rich-toned voice:

"Good evening, sir." Evidently then it was the inferior who had answered the greeting of the superior.

The moonlight was very strong for English moonlight, and the reader can, if he will, take note of the new-comer's appearance by means of the bright white rays. A slightly-built, pale young man, in a long black coat and white cravat, wearing a soft, broad-brimmed black hat.

"Wonderful warm weather we have had lately," said the newcomer.

"Yes, for this atrocious climate it is something unusual, sir," was the response.

"Well, I can only say it's too hot for me," rejoined the pale young man, with a good-tempered laugh. "I find it desperately warm work, walking about in the sun from morning till night, and my work is work that a man can't shirk. I should not like a warmer climate, Fernandez, if I had the cure of souls to attend to as I have here; the heat takes my strength away, and prostrates me more than anything."

And the young curate sighed wearily. "May I presume to offer you a cigar, sir?" asked Fernandez, with a half-mocking emphasis on the word cigar.

The curate laughed. "My dear fellow," he said, "you are a tempter. In the first place, it is unclerical to smoke, in the second, I can't afford it, and in the third, if I could I wouldn't do it, because I would far rather have the money for other purposes. But smoke away; don't let my morose doctrines deter you from the enjoyment of a cigar."

"Oh, dear! no, sir; no other man's doctrines, morose or otherwise, could possibly influence me, I am afraid, either in the matter of cigars or of more important affairs. I am a wilful man, Mr. Clenham, singularly given to the weakness of liking to have my own way."

The words were haughtily spoken; they were almost aggressive in their tone.

The good-tempered, conscientious young curate felt puzzled for a moment.

Fernandez went on smoking his cigar and leaning lazily over the gate.

"So you don't like the climate of England, Mr. Fernandez?"

"No, I hate it, sir," was the short answer, spoken almost passionately.

"Well, it is very changeable, certainly," assented the curate.

Fernandez took his cigar from his lips and smiled upon the curate. His was a singularly sweet smile;

there was a rare fascination in the curl of the short upper lip and the gleaming of the dazzling white teeth. Fernandez was of a splendid type of beauty—dark as a gipsy, and with features of the most perfect regularity. As for the expression of the countenance it was difficult to decide whether it was noble and good, or scornful and evil—it was always changing; sometimes there was angelic sweetness in the face, and sometimes there was wild, sombre passion. There was always power, intellectual vigour and flashing wit—a beautiful face, like a summer thunder sky, where there is always heaven's blue and sunny brightness lurking behind the augriest clouds.

"But, sir," said he, "the climate is not only execrably bad and changeable, but Honey-suckle Cottage, the allotted residence of the schoolmaster of Allonby, is so dilapidated as to afford no sufficient defence or shelter against it: and good Mrs. Bertram and I are exposed alike to the severities of winter, and the rigours of summer. But I endure it all, for her sake; for the kind old soul would lose the twenty pounds yearly allowed for rent by the rector if she took another house."

"Why not represent all this to the rector, Fernandez?" said the curate.

"Yes, the rector must be consulted," replied Fernandez, "and I am sure Mr. Upperton would think that a mere schoolmaster who complained of Honey-suckle Cottage as being dilapidated, ought to go to Bath, or Coventry, or some of those places!"

"Let him think what he likes," replied the good young curate, bringing his strong common sense to bear upon the other one's sarcastic humour. "You owe it to yourself not to spend another winter in such misery. But now," continued the curate, "there is no east wind—no smoke—no damp—no cold; and since we are only in June you may reasonably look for some months' respite from the miseries of the climate."

"Yes," answered Fernandez, "this delightful retreat is more agreeable now than ever, and my parlour window faces the setting sun; so does my bedroom casement. In consequence of this poetical fact, I suffer all the inconvenience of being baked alive if I remain indoors in the evening, and my rooms are like ovens all night long—the windows are too small to admit the fresh air in weather like this."

"Good gracious! What a miserable place Honey-suckle Cottage must be!" cried the curate, "and yet it looks so pretty and picturesque outside."

At this moment there came another footstep along the lane. The two young men looked in the direction from whence the sound approached. Presently there appeared a strongly-built gipsy-looking man. His feet were bare, and he kicked up the dust as he walked. He came to a stand before the young men, and doffed his miserable hat.

"Please to tell a man the nearest way to Colonel Philbertson's, of Maberly Abbey," said the tramp.

It was a brutal voice. It seemed difficult to him to speak civilly to anybody, even when he asked a favour.

"Colonel Philbertson is now abroad," said the curate.

"But where's the nearest way to Maberly?" "If you want assistance," said the curate, "I don't see how you can expect it when the family are away. I would rather give you something out of my own pocket than let you go to Maberly. There are fierce dogs kept there, and in crossing the park there is danger from wild bucks among the deer. Besides, the men-servants are not likely to befriend one in your condition, I am afraid."

The tramp burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Cause I want everything," said he; "food and drink and clothes and bedding! That's quite enough to set my fellow men against me, ain't it?"

"Quite enough," chimed in the eccentric young schoolmaster. "I perceive that you are a philosopher, sir."

"Don't mock the poor fellow," whispered the curate.

Then the gentle young man laid a shilling in the tramp's dirty hand.

"Thank ye," said the man; but even then he jerked out the words, so it seemed, quite unwillingly.

"That will get you a night's lodging and a supper of bread and cheese and beer down in the village," said the curate, "and to-morrow you can call at Rose Lodge and ask for Mr. Cleham, and then, perhaps, I may take a message for you to Colonel Philbertson."

"Here's a sixpence for you," said the reckless schoolmaster, stepping forward and placing one in the man's hand. "Drink to the downfall of the top load, in the strongest beer they brew at the White Raven."

The tramp put the coin in his pocket and walked off, grinning.

When he was out of sight and hearing, Mr. Cleham said to the young schoolmaster:

"What meaning had you in telling the man to drink to the downfall of the topmost load?"

"Don't ask me," replied Fernandez; "it was a wretched attempt at a pun. I wish it was possible to get rid of the habit of making bad puns, but somehow I can't."

"A pun!" repeated the curate.

"Yes, yes, sir; Upperton, the rector. His name must certainly signify the topmost load, but the pun is so excruciatingly bad that it has almost brought on a fit of neuralgia. That reminds me of an old stout Swiss gentleman whom I met in France; he told me he had once eaten pickled onions in an English hotel, pickles so strongly saturated with vinegar that the mere idea of them always brought tears into his eyes whenever he thought of them."

"Why?" asked the curate, bluntly.

"More force of imagination, sir," responded the schoolmaster; "and so my own repugnance to the bad pun I have just made makes me feel quite ill for the moment."

"That's a pity, Mr. Fernandez," responded the curate, in a grave tone of reproof.

"Yes, but I am all right again now, sir," said Fernandez, lightly, "so let us discourse more cheerfully, if you please."

"I mean, Fernandez, that I regret infinitely the deep dislike you have taken to the rector; I see it peeping out on all occasions. Not only is the feeling unkind and even unchristian, but I think it is unjust."

The handsome young man took his cigar from his lips, and smiled down into the dusty road.

"I rejoice exceedingly," he said, "that my dislike is so palpable, since there may even be a dim chance of the Rev. Mr. Upperton discovering for himself the aversion wherewith his subordinate regards him."

The schoolmaster raised his eyes as he spoke, and the light that flashed from them dazzled and shocked the good curate.

"Mr. Fernandez," he said, gently and sorrowfully, "you pain me more than I can express."

"I am sorry to pain you," replied the other, "for I respect you, and, oh, how few there are to whom I could say honestly, 'I like you, I respect you'—how very few!"

"So young," said the curate, looking at him sadly, "so gifted, so strong, so handsome, so capable of good and noble work, and still so bitter, so cynical."

"So full of envy!" cried the schoolmaster, mockingly. "But come, Mr. Cleham, I have claret in my cupboard. Let us have a dish of strawberries; I know Mrs. Bertram gathered some this evening on purpose for me. Come in and sit in the porch, and we will have wine and fruit by the light of the moon. How poetical for dreary England! And really the scent of the roses is very sweet in that porch—see how thickly they cluster over it!"

He had spoken rapidly, gracefully, cordially so far. Now he stopped short.

"I forgot myself," he said, speaking now in cold, measured tones; "the village schoolmaster presumes too far in asking the curate to partake of his poor hospitality."

"Not so!" cried the curate, warmly. "Can you believe such meanness of me after saying just now that you liked and respected me? You are my equal, besides, in education, culture, and no doubt in birth also; in intellect you surpass me greatly." The schoolmaster bowed. "As for the position you occupy, think of it as you will, it is an honourable one."

"Very much so," scoffed the other. "Village schoolmaster at a salary of forty pounds a year, rent and coals found; the duties consist in teaching sixty children five hours on week-days and two on Sundays, keeping them in order during Divine Service, and submitting always to the whims of the tyrannical rector, doffing my hat in his presence while he keeps his on, and so forth. Yes, it is, as you say, an honourable position—only a very paltry, mean, slavish one, a very dull, joyless, hopeless one, one that I infinitely detest while I submit to it."

The passionate young man's voice trembled as he spoke. The curate laid his hand on his shoulder.

"There is no situation so mean that we may not render it lustrous by the light of good works. Is patience nothing?—is industry nothing?—is faith in the Creator, that He will one day raise us higher, either in this world or the next (it may be in both, and I pray that it may)—I ask, is faith nothing? Then, may you not train the minds and hearts of the young children committed to your care? What a sphere of usefulness is yours, Mr. Fernandez!"

The young man gently freed himself from the pressure of the curate's hand; then, shrugging his shoulders, he said:

"Unfortunately, I am not so good as you are. Instead of thinking of the little sunburnt, happy, stupid boys whom I teach, I think of myself. I am kind to them; I never struck one in my life—but I

can't sympathize with these English villagers. No!—I cannot! Remember," he went on, rapidly, "that, although my mother was English, my father was a Spaniard, and I spent all my childhood in travelling about with my parents—living by turns in all the gay and cheerful cities of the Continent. My father was a morose man, but a man of deep learning. When I call him my father, I err, for although he was my mother's husband, he was not my father. Who my father was, I do not know; those two concealed his name from me; I do not even know to what country he belonged. My mother was beautiful, and devoted to Fernandez, her husband, whose name I bear. We were not poor, but we were not rich. We always lived in neat, inexpensive rooms; we dressed plainly; lived well, in the matter of viands. My father was something of an epicure. They were both of them very kind to me. I passed a life of freedom. I learned to love nature amid the deep German forests, on the borders of the blue Mediterranean sea,—in the fair Swiss valleys, where the snowy mountain peaks rose above us, and took all the colours of the rainbow in the fading glories of the sunset—how unlike your pale English sunsets!" Here he made a slight gesture of impatience. "I learned to love works of art, because I, a judge of paintings, began to paint myself. I obtained entrance into the libraries—I studied rare old MSS; then Fernandez said I was a lad of genius, and he took more pleasure in instructing me than ever he had done before. I grew a 'clerkly scholar,' he would say—and good for me it was—was it not, Mr. Cleham?—for you see, by this means I have been deemed worthy to fill the exalted position which I now occupy."

"I wish you would leave off this bitter satirising of your humble position, my dear fellow. Try and better it by all means, but don't scoff at it."

"I won't then, since it vexes you," responded the young schoolmaster frankly.

The young men had entered the porch and sat there before the claret and the biscuits which good Mrs. Bertram had brought them. Fernandez went on with his story:

"I was a very ambitious youth, without knowing it; I had day-dreams, half-unconscious reveries in which I saw myself renowned as poet, painter, or politician. Meanwhile life was to me beautiful without being in any way splendid or luxurious; the luxuries we enjoyed were those of beautiful nature's giving, a delicious climate, luscious fruits, the bright blue, cool ocean for a bath, the shade and perfume of orange groves, the music of birds, and the ripple of waves—there was the music of the gondoliers also. Well, after a while we journeyed to Constantinople—they were restless people my stepfather and my mother; they never stayed long anywhere. While we remained at Constantinople, the cholera broke out and Fernandez, my stepfather, was attacked. He lay dying one morning in horrible torments on a sofa bed which my mother had made for him; there were raised mattresses and a crimson coverlid. I see it now, the white curtain filled with the wind and swelling gently in and out, the flowers growing in huge stone jars (my poor mother always so loved flowers), the light fragile chairs and other furniture scattered about in disorder; my mother in a long white dressing-robe, her black hair floating on her shoulders, her hands clasped, her face agonised! No doctor could do anything for Fernandez, although we had two; he died, and then I fell ill myself with fever that same night, and lay tossing unconscious of all but pain for days. When I came to myself there was only a ragged old woman in my room. I saw that she was bending down before a drawer which she was turning over unceremoniously. 'What are you doing there?' I asked, in Turkish, for I have a knowledge of most European languages. Now I knew that in that drawer my mother kept her money and what few jewels she possessed. The old woman came to my bed and glared at me with her wicked eyes. 'If you holla out I'll strangle you,' she said. 'Your mother is dead of cholera. If you speak I'll not give you water, and you'll die thirst.' I was consumed by the most fearful thirst at that very moment. A large jar filled with lemon drink stood within reach of my hand, but I was too weak to touch it, far less raise it to my lips. The news of the death of my mother was a fearful shock to my nerves, but somehow she had failed to draw forth the passionate affection which I am confident slumbers within me. I was, notwithstanding my orphaned and desolate position, loath to render up my life without a struggle; nay, I even desired passionately to live. I felt that the terrible old Turk had probably robbed me of all he property my parents had left—perhaps she had even murdered my mother! When I came again to health and strength I should most likely find myself without one penny piece, without one friend in the world; and yet I clung passionately to the hope of life, poor fool that I was!"

"Fool!" echoed the curate. "Nay, do not speak

so, my dear friend Life, the gift of Heaven, is given to us for a good and noble purpose. Do you mean to tell me that we should only value it inasmuch as we can make it pleasant and bright to ourselves?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"Alas," he said, "I have not been brought up in the same school as you, dear sir. You are a saint, I am a sinner, or am on the verge of becoming one."

"But to return to my story. The old Turkish woman looked more like an evil spirit than anything else, such eyes, so bright withal, and so full of wicked murderous fire; such hideous grotesque features, and there with her scarlet handkerchief bound tightly about her yellow forehead; her cruel claw-like hands, strong too, I was confident, with a virg strength; while I lay there, weak as a three years' nay, as a three months' child. It was, surely, to the interest of this dreadful old monster to murder me, for if I recovered and went and complained of her to the authorities, her life would be in danger, or at least her liberty. Knowing she had robbed me, I felt that she had no intention to help me any more, she was determined that I should die. I resolved to make one more trial for my life. 'Listen, old lady,' I said to her. 'You are very, very old, probably seventy or eighty years of age, in a year or two you will be certain to die, but most likely you have not three months to live. Now if you keep water and lemon drink from me, so that I shall die of thirst, if you don't give me air and raise my pillows, and call the doctor in to see me; if you give me poison or throttle me while I am sleeping, so sure as you die you will go to burning flames, to the bottomless pit. It is the fate of all murderers. Now I see in your eyes that you have it in your heart to kill me. I know many things, many more than you would give me credit for, and I know that you have some wish to put me out of the way; reflect well before you do it.'

"The old creature broke into a cowardly whimper; that presence of mind saved my life. She seemed to think, poor superstitious creature, that it lay in my power to cause her death by a wish. She then hastened to assure me that she would do everything to serve me, and positively, this repulsive-looking witch tended and nursed me back again towards life and health. The first day that I was able to totter across the room and take my seat at the open window, I saw the old creature start and glance wildly about her. Alas she had robbed my unfortunate parents of everything of value which they possessed, even their very clothes, a bag of gold pieces, worth between one and two hundred pounds of English money, was gone; so were my mother's rings, brooches and ear-rings; my stepfather's great gold watch and splendid gold chain, the gift of some Spanish grandee, whom he had served. There was hardly a change of clothes left for me, only my shabbiest suit; no shoes, no toilette requisites, and no linen."

"Can you imagine a more forlorn outcast than I; tall and haggard, gaunt, pale, and worn to a shadow from recent illness; moneyless, friendless, homeless. The wicked old woman had kept the rent well paid up so far of the apartments, as by that means, she had had full power to rob her heart's content."

"You have made me a beggar," said I, smiling a ghastly smile at the old creature. "But you have saved my life, and I will not betray you."

"Well, that night old Hurza ran away and never came back again. I remained in the rooms two more days. She had left me lemons, a little brandy cordial and some hard biscuits; with this much of food, I managed to exist till the third day, then I went out early in the morning and took the key to the landlord, who lived close at hand. Lodging in that house was an English clergyman, the Rev. Francis Upperton, he heard of my defenceless condition, he invited me to breakfast with him, he thought me evidently very much of a heathen—perhaps he was right. When he discovered that I was well educated, he took a great interest in me, and offered me the post of schoolmaster here, with the extra advantage of teaching his children languages,—all for love, you understand, no extra pay,—oh! he is a generous man is the vicar!"

"At least, he did you a service when you most required it," said the curate.

"And that is the bitterest drop in a cup of bitterness!" cried Fernandez, passionately. "I owe him money—current coin of the realm—some thirty pounds for the cost of my voyage home and my proper outfit."

"At least, it was a generous action," said Arthur Clemenham.

Fernandez burst into a scornful laugh.

"Very. It made such a noise in the county, this story of the vicar's charity towards the young English-speaking Spaniard. People came to stare at me as at a wild animal. A dozen times a week does the pious vicar remind me of the obligation. I have

been here one year, and have taught his children weekly, French, German, and Italian. Soon they will begin Spanish. I ought, you will tell me, to be delighted at the chance of repaying my benefactor," he said a bitterly scornful stress on the word, "in this fashion. The salary he pays me barely suffices to provide me with food and clothes, little better than a peasant's; and according to what I have done now in the line of private tutor, I have surely repaid him nearly if not quite that sum; but Mr. Upperton informs me that six years of such instruction as I afford is not worth six months' tuition from a regular diplomaed tutor. Although his stupid, heavy-headed boys have made much progress, the reverend papa has never uttered any word of thanks or praise; he tries to bear me down with the weight of the obligations I owe him. I know enough now of England and the English to understand that I could obtain a situation as clerk to correspond in foreign languages in almost any merchant's counting office, and earn more than three times my present salary; but Upperton has made me sign a paper binding myself for six years as the schoolmaster in this village, which I hate. He knows I am something of an artist, and he tells me he shall expect me to paint him two pictures every year to hang in his dining-room, drawing-room, and gallery. He shows them all to the visitors who frequent the house as 'efforts of the young man whom I rescued from starving—very tolerable, yes—but art requires undivided attention, impossible to be at once a schoolmaster and a successful artist; no, he will never do much at it—but still, his talent is fair, very fair.'"

The young man mimicked the voice of the vicar in a tone of bitter mockery.

The good curate sighed.

"You are wrong to give way to this angry despondency, Fernandez," he said. "Why not appeal to the generosity of the vicar, and ask him to release you from a bond which you hate?"

"No," cried the schoolmaster; "he has no more real generosity than the old Turkish woman whom I mentioned just now. Francis Upperton is a ravenous wolf in sheep's clothing, I hate him, and I have no words emphatic enough to express my contempt of him."

The good young curate sighed.

These evidences of hatred, oppression, priestly pride, and rebellious mutiny, as exemplified in this history of the rich rector, and the poor schoolmaster, were painful and burdensome to his pure spirit and lofty soul.

CHAPTER II.

O'er these scenes our hearts will linger

Until Time's relentless finger

Breaks the choicest links in memory's chain;

Praying wildly ever

For what is ours, oh, never!

The perfect life, without a spot or stain.

WHILE the young men conversed in the arbour, the tramp went on his way. But he did not descend into the village of Altonby, which lay to his right; he did not apply at the "White Raven" for ale, cheese, or lodging; he seemed to know the way well which led to Maberly Abbey, for he entered a thick copse, which took him straight into that great park of Maberly which was so famed in the county, and where stood the grand old ruins of the former Maberly, the magnificent monastery which had showed its pillars, porticos, and oriel windows to the world four hundred years before, in the times when Tudor princes ruled in England, when ladies of high birth read Greek and Latin more fluently than the dames of to-day read French, and yet were not above attending to the affairs of the household. Grand old times, when men were so chivalrous, and women were so fair, wise, and chaste. Grim old times, when the headsmen's block and the cruel axe did such bloody work on so slight occasion. Poetical, romantic old times, when gentlemen, gallant and true, died for love on the points of their swords.

Our hideous-looking tramp need not have been supposed to trouble himself much with questions which concerned the poetry of the tragical past or the comparative merits of the busy money-making present; yet it is nevertheless a fact that he went straight to the ruins and wandered about among pillar and archway, and broken window-places, much as might an artist or poet who desired to study grand effects by moonlight.

He came at length to a large flat stone, and he kicked against it, and stared at it, and muttered, or rather growled at it.

"It must be here—It's here," said the tramp.

Then he pulled tools from his pocket—a wedge and a small axe—and he set to work quickly and very cautiously, by the light of the moon, to raise the great white stone. At last, after a mighty effort, it yielded, and then the stone was so loose that the man soon pushed it aside

There was soft earth under the stone, and into this the man dug with both his hands. Evidently all this soft, sandy soil was already dug up, so that there needed not much effort to bring to light a thick iron box, about half-a-yard square. It seemed heavy. The man strained and growled when he brought it to light. He almost stumbled with its weight. It fell on the ground, and he knelt by its side. There was a padlock to this box, and the tramp had with him an instrument with which he strove to pick the lock. He seemed to think it would be an easy matter, but when after repeated and violent efforts the lock resisted his attempt as firmly as at first, an angry oath broke from the man's lips.

At this moment a shadow came between him and the moonlight, and the man, raising his eyes, saw a fair, alight woman, clothed in white, leaning against an ivy-grown archway. Her arms were folded across her breast, her face, seen in the moonlight, was half divine. She might have been the spirit of some sweet saint whose life in the flesh had been cast in those far-off chivalrous days.

But our tramp was not a man of an imaginative temperament; no merely ghostly terrors had any annoyance for him. He was thunderstruck at being watched at his secret work in this fashion, and he rushed at the woman with the full, deliberate intention of murdering her.

She watched him approach until he was within a foot of her, and then ran away, light as a shadow, and the sound of her laughter came to the ruffian's ears.

She was gone!

In vain he hunted the ruins; in vain he searched, all the while cursing fearfully. At last he returned to the spot where he had left the box.

It was gone—completely gone—and there was the gaping hole from which he had extracted it mocking him, as it were.

The man clasped his hands, and howled out:

"And it contained a hundred thousand pounds and the papers!"

The tramp repeated his words in a gasping tone of horror.

"It's gone; and it held one hundred thousand pounds in notes, and gold, and the papers! it's gone, gone, gone!" he reiterated, in a voice of blank dismay.

Presently he began a desperate and savage search. Once more he crept on hands and knees over every portion of the ruins; he felt with his eager, nervous fingers for the cold surface of the iron box. In vain all his efforts. The summer night wore on; the beautiful dawn, with its dappled grays and rosy streaks, took up the empire of the eastern sky; the sun came blazing forth joyously in his chariot of flame; the songs of birds awoke in woods fresh and sweet with the dew; but the miserable man in rags neither saw nor felt any of these elements of beauty, only he used the stronger, brighter light as a means for a search more eager, more desperate.

At length he gave up the attempt and sat upon the ground huddled together in an attitude of blank despair.

He was a frightful-looking ruffian, this tramp, one whom a woman or a child might well tremble to meet in a lonely by-path, or upon a desolate moor. He sat with the joyous morning sunshine blazing full on his wicked face, with its burnt complexion and its beard and moustache of many weeks' growth.

"It was too heavy to carry," he muttered; "I could not have lifted it far. How then did that woman remove it? Oh, heaven and earth, can I have had a dream—a nightmare! I drank a lot of ale down at the Golden Mermaid in the next village, and what with the heat of the sun—but, no, no!—I could not have tagged up yonder white stone while I was asleep. I ain't a somnambulist! One hundred thousand pounds and the will and the certificates of marriage, and also the title deeds! I'd have made 'em pay me five thousand pounds for the papers, and I'd have taken fifteen thousand in gold for myself. I'd have made a fortune of twenty thousand out of it, a thousand a year for J. S."—he laughed hoarsely—"and now I am again as miserable a beggar as I ever was. I should have sat on that box till daylight, and when that female came near me I should have strangled her."

He moved his hands murderously as he spoke.

The morning grew hotter.

The tramp rose up at length, and slunk away from the ruins. He kept in the more sheltered portions of the bosky foliaged park. He could see herds of deer browsing in the woodland vistas, and he bethought him once or twice of the warning of the young curate. None of the animals, however, molested him. He walked towards the splendid modern mansion of Maberly, and presently sheltering himself behind a spreading beech, he caught a view of the house.

It was a noble English home, built about the reign of William the Third; it was vast, and solid,

and spacious, rather than light, or graceful, or picturesque in architecture. Terrace on terraced gradually to the mansion.

There were vases filled with flowering shrubs, there were fountains sparkling in the sunlight; the smooth lawns below the terraces were green as emerald, and glossy as velvet. The tall flowering acacias whispered together in the breeze. Everything was in the most perfect order that wealth could compass, or care and taste—taste of the placid, costly, aristocratic English sort—devise. There was a large lake to the left of the mansion—a lake in a splendid basin of yellow marble brought from Italy. In the glossy bosom of this lake certain stately white swans were sailing. All was, it seemed, in the very rapture of repose.

This ugly, filthy, ragged tramp in the red handkerchief—what affinity had he with this scene of calm and superb grandeur? Yet he chuckled as he watched the sailing swans and the playing fountains, the marble terrace-steps, and the blooming flowers in the great vases.

"All very fine," he said, "but I'll trouble your repose yet, my gallant colonel; I'll plant a thorn in your respectable side, that shall torment you more than your aristocratic acquaintance, the gout, which pays you such faithfully punctual visits, they tell me."

"Yes, yes; only I should like to startle you slightly this fine summer morning, upset your nerves a little, take away your appetite for the dainty breakfast which is being prepared within; but you are amid the Swiss mountains, they tell me, enjoying the cold white glaciers this frizzling hot weather, if I had only opened the box, I could have lived like a prince till you came back again, and made you pay me for the lost deeds into the bargain, but I'll have it out of you, by George; I'll make you pay me twenty thousand pounds when I see you again, meanwhile I'll up to the house and ask a draught of ale and a plate of cold meat this fine summer morning." He turned to the side and threaded a bosky archway of limes, which led him into a green enclosure surrounded with hedges of wild dog roses. There was a high white wall at one side, a door in this wall led into the stable-yard. Evidently the tramp knew his way about the precincts of the mansion right well.

He passed through the door, and immediately a great chained dog set up a tremendous barking and pulled furiously at the glistening fetters which held him captive. It was no wonder the faithful animal was so uneasy; the tramp was just that kind of creature for whom the dogs of well ordered houses have no mercy, towards whom they are cruel, and pitiless, and ruthless as man is himself towards his fellow man under certain hard conditions of humanity.

The tramp paused, and he cursed the dog in a low growling tone, like muttered thunder. He fixed his light eyes, ablaze with diabolical light, upon the angry red eyes of the great dog and the spirit, all warped away from good as it was, all distorted into the likeness of the fiend, all cunning, and despicable, and evil—the human spirit yet quelled the weaker spirit of the animal. One steadily stare from the tramp's wicked eye and black Nero retired, whimpering, to his kennel.

Then the tramp went on and knocked at a side door, a stout woman in a cotton dress opened it.

"Can you give a poor fellow a meal's victuals, missus?" asked the tramp, in a whimpering tone.

The woman called aloud:

"Please, Mrs. Nutson, here's a man begging. Is he to have something?"

The stout woman was an under-servant of the lowest grade the great house admitted. She was a servant of servants, but neat and clean and respectable, and earning good wages. She looked down contemptuously enough on the tramp. She would not have liked her spotless cotton skirts to brush against his ragged clothes even in passing him, but she was willing to give him what he asked for, in the tramp's language, "a meal's victuals."

Mrs. Nutson was the cook. She came out from regions redolent of newly-ground coffee and toasted ham. The servants were just going to breakfast.

Mrs. Nutson was a ruddy, comely personage of forty-five. She was neatness and cleanliness itself. She stared haughtily enough at the tramp.

"Yes, give him a plate of the cold veal and some bread," she said. "He can eat it in the coach-house."

The under-servant went away and Mrs. Nutson watched the tramp.

"I'm mortal thirsty, mum," said he, pulling his forelock.

"Well, you can have a draught of beer, I dare say."

"Thank ye, mum."

"But I can't have a number more of your sort sent here," continued the cook. "That's the worst of giving charity to those of your sort; you send such a dreadful lot of others."

The tramp grinned.

"I ain't got many friends in this part, mum," he said. "I suppose," he added, suddenly, "the colonel ain't expected home yet awhile?"

"What can that matter to you, my man?" returned the cook, sharply. "The plate is all sent to the bank and the jewels of Mrs. Philbertson and Lady Juliette Cadette, the colonel's ward. We have eight men on the premises and four savage watch-dogs. We have plenty of fire-arms besides."

The tramp discovered a tone of fear in Mrs. Nutson's voice, and he resolved to play upon it, for his disposition was a singularly malicious one. The other servant returned now with the bread and meat, and she had also brought of her own accord a jug of ale.

"I knew you'd give it him, mum," she said to the cook.

"Certainly."

The tramp took the plate and jug, and then addressed the cook.

"I've nought to do with that sort, mum," he said, "as looks out for other folks' plate—not I. I'm a honest man as ever wore shoe-leather; not as I've wore much lately, as you might tell by just casting a eye at my feet. No, mum, they ain't clean," added the fellow, insolently; "and if you'll forgive me fur saying so, neither would youn be if you had walked forty mile on the dusty high-roads without the chance of a wash for a week. Well, mum, but I'm as honest a man as ever walked the earth, only I knows a lot. I knows the sort as can make pick-locks as easy, mum, as you can make cakes; and as for firearms, they has a good stock of them; as for dogs, they can pison 'em by dashing a new sort of dust in their eyes; as for eight men, I know a band of twenty that go about now o' nights in a gang in town and country. Have you read the papers lately, mum, and seen what a state the country is coming to? The police can't do nothing!"

"But," cried Mrs. Nutson, who had grown white with terror, "I tell you we have no plate, jewels, nor money in the house."

"They won't believe that, mum. Bless you, they'd rather steal the sheets and the satin curtains than go away empty; and kill all is their maxim now—wholesale massacre, and the police can't do nothing!"

Here the tramp took a deep draught from the ale-jug. When he looked again at the cook there was a wicked leer in his eyes.

"Good gracious! Thank heaven the colonel will be home again next week!" said Mrs. Nutson.

"That was all I wanted to know," said the tramp, to himself. "Good morning, mum," said he. "I'll put this meat in my pocket, and drink off the ale. Here's to your health, mum, and to the speedy return of his honour, the colonel, and her honour, the colonel's wife, and her ladyship, the colonel's ward. I say, ain't she a great beauty?" and here the rascal actually winked.

"You are an insolent fellow," cried the cook.

"How dare you talk of Lady Juliette?"

"Bless you, mum, I was always a lady's man," replied the tramp. "They has their weaknesses; but I stands up for 'em, pretty dears."

With another nod of odious familiarity the creature passed out. When he appeared again in the yard, old Nero set up a stealthy, frightened, angry growl, like distant thunder.

"Ha, my friend," said the tramp; "it strikes me that you will have to overcome your dislike to me next week, when the colonel comes back, since I shall establish myself here most decidedly for the autumn. Hello! to think all the money I have in the world is the sixpence and the shilling those paltry fellows gave me last night!"

Then the tramp went his way, and we must follow him for awhile as he lingers along the dusty highways, and after walking some miles under the blazing sun, turns into a rick yard where, finding a shady place between two ricks, he gives himself up to repose.

A cruel heart and a sullied conscience do not always prevent a man from sleeping sweetly and soundly, if his nerves be strong, his frame healthy, and braced by exercise.

The tramp lay on the clean, pleasant-scented straw, his coarse face half hidden by his arm, in an attitude of perfect repose. His breathing was regular; it is even possible that his dreams were pleasant.

And so the long, hot day waned, and the cool, delicious evening took the place of the bold, laughing sunlight.

(To be continued.)

MARRIAGE IN RUSSIA.—Ladies in Russia are very anxious to marry, because they have no liberty before marriage. They are kept constantly under the maternal eye until given up to their husband, and then they take their own course. Almost as soon as a girl is born in the better ranks of society, her parents begin to prepare the dowry she must have

when she goes to her husband. She must furnish everything for an outfit in life, even to a dozen new shirts for her coming husband. The young man goes to the house of his proposed bride and counts over her dresses, and examines the furniture, and sees the whole with his own eyes before he commits himself to the irrevocable bargain.

SCIENCE.

IRON AND HYDROGEN.—A curious observation has been made by M. Caron on an alteration produced in iron when it is kept melted for some time in an atmosphere of hydrogen. The metal, we read, somewhat increases in density and becomes soft and malleable as copper. Re-melted in a crucible it becomes again when cold, doubtless in consequence of the evolution of absorbed hydrogen. Are we to regard the softness and malleability as the properties of an alloy of hydrogen and iron?

PRESERVED BREAD.—Preserved bread has been suggested by M. Maurice as a substitute for biscuits for the use of sailors, soldiers, and travellers. The bread is made in the ordinary way, and is then thoroughly dried. It is afterwards exposed to high pressure steam for a short time, and is subsequently submitted to hydraulic pressure to reduce the bulk. The cakes so produced will keep, it is said, for years, if protected from moisture. They are necessarily hard, but are masticated as easily as biscuits. The process by which these cakes are made is long and troublesome, and the only advantage that they can possess over biscuits consists in the circumstance that they have undergone the primary fermentation which some writers on dietetics allege is absolutely necessary to produce bread of a perfectly wholesome character.

STORMS IN THE SUN.—Professor J. D. Steele says the result of observations now being taken shows that storms rage upon the sun with a violence of which we can form no conception. Hurricanes sweep over its surface with terrific violence. Vast cyclones wrap its fires into whirlpools, at the bottom of which our earth could lie like a boulder in a volcano. Huge flames dart out to enormous distances, and fly over the sun with a speed greater than that of the earth itself through space. At one time a cone of fire shot out 80,000 miles, and then died away, all in ten minutes' time. There is nothing in these phenomena to alarm us. They have, in all probability, happened constantly for ages past. That we have now means of investigating their nature and measuring their height and velocity furnishes no cause of anxiety.

RAISING SUNKEN VESSELS BY BALLOONS.—Operations have been commenced in the Mersey by Mr. Maquay, of Messrs. Bewley and Webb's, of Dublin, to raise the steam tug Brother Jonathan, which is sunk at the southern extremity of the Prince's Stage, Liverpool. There will be four balloons, calculated to lift 40 tons each, 20 to lift 20 tons, and 12 to lift 10 tons—total, 680 tons. The balloons are supplied by a number of gas generators, and when the latter have been "charged," to the balloons affixed an apparatus is to be lowered to the sunken vessel and fastened to it by an iron bolt, and the formation of the hydrogen gas in the generator will be commenced, which will inflate the balloons and cause them to rise, the vessel rising with them.

A SINGULAR SOUNDING BOTTLE.—Another instrument which was employed in the "Porcupine" expedition with very important results, in connection with the sounding apparatus, is a water-bottle for the collection of samples of water either from the bottom or from any intermediate stratum. This is simply a strong cylindrical vessel of brass, furnished at the top and bottom with a conical valve opening upwards, and holding about 60 oz. of water. While this bottle is descending through the water with the sounding apparatus, the valves readily yield to the upward pressure, and a continuous current streams through it; but as soon as the descent is checked, either by the arrival of the apparatus at the bottom, or by a stop put on the line from above, the valves fall into their places, and thus enclose the water that may fill the bottle at the moment. The expansion of this water and of its dissolved gases, as the bottle is brought to the surface, causes a pressure from within, which lifts the upper valve so as to permit the escape of any part of the contents of the bottle that may be in excess of its capacity. Of the water thus obtained, some samples were carefully preserved for complete analysis at home, especially with a view to the determination of the quantity of organic matter contained in them. But the greater part of the samples were at once boiled for some time, for the purposes of extracting the gases they might hold in solution; and the proportions of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbonic acid in the mixture of gases thus obtained were carefully determined.—"The Deep Sea."



[DAISY'S STRATAGEM.]

MYSTERY OF THE BLACK DIAMOND.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE day following this scene was one long remembered by the household at Eaglescliffe. It was such a day as the superstitious call "unlucky."

In the first place, one of the maids in dusting dislodged from its support a very fine and valuable painting of the just deceased lord, which hung in the library; it fell with a crash to the floor, face downward, and was much injured.

Next, Fidele, Lady Violet's maid, was taken violently and unaccountably ill, and was lying so in a remote part of the house, when my lady's bell began to ring as though it were crazy.

Everybody that heard that bell tore away to Lady Violet's rooms, their steps quickened as they approached, by the sound of frightful screams, and the sight of volumes of smoke pouring from those apartments.

Miggs was the first on the scene; so much before the rest indeed, that by the time they got there the fire—there had been one—was all put out, though the air was thick with smoke yet.

Lady Violet, with her dress clinging to her in scorched fragments, lay on a drenched sofa, half supported by the faithful governess.

She was already comparatively calm, only moaning now and then:

"Oh, my face! Oh, my face!"

She had been sealing a letter, and the lighted taper had fallen and caught her dress, Miggs hurriedly explained to the frightened crowd, and the first thing was to summon a physician.

Half-a-dozen men started for the stables on the instant, and the man who reached a surgeon first, and brought him in triumph to Eaglescliffe, was blessed by all the rest.

The young countess had not a servant, figuratively speaking, who would not have been ready to lay down his life for her, if it had been necessary.

The gloom that fell upon the grand and palace-like mansion after this accident was worse than that while the earl lay dead in the house; even the men staring disconsolately at each other when the whisper crept abroad that the beauty of the young countess was for ever destroyed. She would live, but no surgeon's art could ever restore that exquisite face to its original perfection.

Conway came back early the following week. He had his forged proofs of a marriage between him-

self and Lady Violet in his pocket, along with the Queen's pardon. He was furious when he heard the news. He snapped and snarled at those who told him like an enraged cur. Then he settled down into sulky waiting, till Wednesday came round, and brought the London lawyers, with whom Lady Violet had made an appointment for this day.

Conway had the effrontery to present himself before them with his forged papers. The lawyers were wary, however, and, after a consultation, informed him civilly that it was impossible to proceed in the business which had brought them down, till Lady Violet was better.

The ex-convict glowered at them savagely, but there was no help for it.

The day following this incident, Miss Miggs came to him.

The face of the little governess was pale and stern.

"My lady is asking for you, sir," she said, in a constrained voice, as though she was saying a lesson; and Conway, scarcely crediting his own ears, followed her at once.

It was with feelings akin to awe, he entered the luxurious room in which he had last seen Lady Violet, in all the brilliance and queenliness of her superb beauty.

Miggs led the way through this to the bed-chamber, a snowy retreat, where, amid billows of lace and linen, he could just discern, through the twilight atmosphere, a recumbent figure.

Miggs placed him a seat near the couch, and withdrew to the adjoining room.

Not a feature of her who lay there was visible. But through openings in the bandages two liquid dark eyes shone up at him with a strange light.

"Conway," said a voice, too sweetly like the Lady Violet's to leave a doubt that it was indeed hers, if even he had entertained any suspicion concerning the tenant of the couch. At the same moment a slender, uninjured hand was extended and a velvety palm slid into his.

A strange thrill shot through his frame as he touched this little hand, and he gazed fascinated into the depths of these liquid eyes.

"I have been hard, and cold, and proud," continued the voice, "but I have resolved to be so no longer. I have determined to do what is right at last."

Conway drew a deep inspiration, like a man labouring under some singular oppression. He was indeed too bewildered to even return the pressure of the hand he held in his

"Can you forgive me that I wished to ignore the sacred relations that bind us together? Can you forgive and love me the same, as though I had been true to my heart all the time, instead of listening to my pride?"

Conway pressed her hand now, but he did not speak.

Could this be the scornful, queenly young countess, who had treated him with such superbly contemptuous airs awhile since? Could it by any possibility be any one else? Was he being tricked by some combination clever enough to deceive even him?

He looked as narrowly as the light would permit at the little white hand that he held. The delicate tapering fingers, the pink, almond-shaped nails were familiar—were Lady Violet's own, beyond doubt. A suspicion of the truth never crossed his mind, not even when he bent and looked with sharp scrutiny into the softly luminous eyes that met his with an expression at the same time strange and familiar.

Unquestionably they were Lady Violet's eyes. Hers shone just so darkly bright. It was love's eloquence made them strange and familiar.

"I shall never be beautiful any more," the voice said. "Shall you mind—very much? You don't answer me, Conway. Do you find it so hard to forgive the wayward pride of a spoiled girl, or was it only my looks and my wealth you loved after all?"

"It was yourself I loved," he said, at last, and there was a real feeling in his tone.

Miss Miggs came back at this moment.

"The time is up," she said with a queer look at him.

"Go," the voice said, sweetly. "You may come again to-morrow, if you like."

Conway rose to his feet, hesitating.

"Do you suffer much now?" he asked.

"Not now, except when my burns are dressed."

He kissed her hand, and quitted the rooms more like a man in a dream than like one waking.

He went the next day, as he had been told, half expecting to be denied admittance. But Miggs opened the door the instant he knocked, and stern and pale as before, led the way to the white-draped bed-chamber.

Doubt and suspicion had assailed the ex-convict meanwhile.

"This change in my haughty countess is too sudden," he said to himself. "I must watch her sharp this time, if they let me in."

He found the same recumbent figure, the same

magnetic touch and thrilling eyes, the same low sweet voice—Lady Violet's—yes—certainly, Lady Violet's. Gradually the sense of strangeness seemed to lessen. He stayed longer to-day, and if the invalid perceived his scepticism she gave no sign. She drew from him an account of the interview with the lawyers, and professed great indignation at their reluctance to transact business with him. When he went away, she pressed into his hand a fold of paper.

"Just to show you that I do trust and believe in you, though I haven't seemed to do so," she said, in explanation.

It was a blank cheque on a London banker, the blank left for him to fill at will. As Conway paused in the domed corridor to examine it, his unaccustomed cheek burned crimson.

"Can it be that she loves me as she says," he mused, as he disposed of it, with a strangely agitated face. "She, the pure and good, I—ah, Heaven, what have I to do with purity and goodness?"

The next day he was told that Lady Violet was not so well.

He lay upon the grass in the shade of the park shrubbery all day, haunted by the touch of the taper hands, and the witchery of a pair of liquid eyes. And his gloomy face grew darker as the hours wore on. "Can it be a trick?" he mused. "What cheat could be played upon me?"

Then he was admitted again, and those dulcet tones reminded him of old times, rippled in his ears with siren flow, and ravished his senses away from him again.

"Would you mind, dear, if we should be married over again," questioned the voice one day, "as soon as I am well enough. I should like it, and besides, the lawyers would not need go into the mysteries of that old sweet romance of ours."

Strangely enough, the very matter which ought most to have excited Conway's suspicions, lulled them. He fell in with the proposition eagerly. It relieved him positively of all risk. His last doubt vanished with his satisfaction at this new aspect of affairs. Not even momentary compunctions seized him at thought of the wrong he proposed to do not only to Lady Violet, but her unknown and unconscious husband; ambition would have silenced them had they arisen. Why, if the deception was never discovered, what enormous revenues would be at his control, what rank and wealth his children might inherit!

Gilderoy Evelyn would be welcome to the Nest and its beggarly belongings.

A still small voice asked if he should ever feel safe and sleep sound so long as Gilderoy Evelyn lived. Ambition and greed could not clamour loud enough to drown that one misgiving of his soul.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MISS DUDEVANT, coquette and belle as she still was, soon tired of London.

She imagined that everybody must know that she had been "disappointed" again. Besides, so few of the best people were in town just now.

Lady Evelyn and she had been very good friends once, and for long she had a standing invitation to visit at the Nest. It was true that since that time a coolness had arisen between them; but Miss Dudevant was not a person to suffer so small a matter as Lady Evelyn's disapproval of herself to interfere with her movements; and in her present mood, the Nest was really the only place she could think of going to.

Lady Evelyn's surprise, not to say dismay, at the sight of Miss Dudevant and her maid—baggage included—could hardly be expressed. Indeed, the countess was dumb, as it were, before the torrent of soft reproaches with which Beatrix inundated her.

She and Sparks had come from the station in a hired carriage. Their arrival was altogether unheralded; the earl could not have been expected to send for them.

But Beatrix chose to consider herself aggrieved in the fact, though no one credited her assertion that she had written to announce her arrival.

Lady Evelyn was of a very pliant and yielding nature, and much as she disliked Miss Dudevant, she found it difficult to resist her insinuating softness.

"I was so glad to have such a friend as you to come to till the edge of my grief had worn off," sighed Beatrix, lovingly, and looking like some bright-winged bird in the gay summer robes in which she had fluttered down from her dressing-room.

If there was any sorrow in her heart it was over the vanished splendours of Eaglescliffe. Her azure eyes were serene and innocent of pain as wood violets.

"The poor old earl loved me so," she went on, candidly: "and you know, Lady Evelyn, I couldn't

be expected to sacrifice my youth and beauty to his title and magnificence. I hope his unfortunate attachment to me had nothing to do with his death. Do you think it could, Lady Ju?" (Lady Evelyn's christian name was Julia.)

Captain Evelyn and the earl had been away all day; so they did not know of Miss Dudevant's arrival, till strolling up the avenue together, they came upon her suddenly in the drawing-room.

She had heard them coming, and had posed herself. She made a pretty enough picture, too, with her drooping yellow curls and childish figure, nestled upon the cushion at the countess's feet. She was very small, diminutive almost, it will be remembered.

But Captain Evelyn, and the earl, too, it must be confessed, would much rather have seen Sparks sitting there than her.

Her real object in coming to the Nest had been to make an attempt on Gilderoy Evelyn, who had once held an absorbing, though fleeting passion, for her dazzling prettiness. The handsome guardsman, however, met her but coolly. He recognised in her instinctively an enemy of Lady Violet, and lost though the queen of his heart might be to him, he could harbour no kindness for her enemies. Indeed, now that matters looked darker than ever for the young Countess of Eaglescliffe, now that her friends grew fewer, and her detractors more, the devotion of the gallant and loyal captain increased in proportion.

Miss Dudevant would air her charms and graces in vain for him. But for remaining where he might possibly be of service to Lady Violet, he would have quitted the Nest without ceremony on finding Beatrix Dudevant there.

Years before, when this girl's beauty was at its zenith, and her admirers were plenty as bees about honey, Roy Evelyn had fallen in love with her, or imagined that he had. The coquette—she was a merciless trifter—had played with him recklessly then, stimulating his passion as only a capricious woman can, and finally dropping him, with his moth wings so singed that he had never since had any other feeling than aversion for the flame that had burned him.

In her vanity and self-sufficiency, she would not see this. She knew that he had loved Lady Violet. But she disposed of, what was to hinder her resuming the old way, and finally marrying him, if, as seemed probable now, he should become Lord Evelyn in time?

The earl was not so old, but his health was none of the best, and he might drop off any day, Miss Dudevant reasoned.

She could have screamed for joy when Sparks, who shared her jealous spite against Lady Violet, and was sharp for news besides, brought her word that the young countess had accidentally burned herself so badly that it was doubtful if she ever saw again. In any case, her good looks were quite ruined.

Miss Dudevant did not display her transports even to Sparks, and she shuddered even to her over the news. But for all that she was glad in her heart that the incomparable beauty of the young countess was for ever destroyed.

As much as it was in her to love any one but herself, this selfish pretty creature loved Captain Evelyn. His indifference to her charms had, perhaps, as much to do with it as anything, and she would have sacrificed him without scruples, to another prince of such magnificence as Lord Eaglescliffe. But at present her fickle heart was wrapped in his handsome face, and this unhappy event which seemed to remove Lady Violet farther than ever from him, was welcomed accordingly.

The gloom which the accident at Eaglescliffe cast over, not only the inmates of the Nest, but the whole country side, was like a pall.

Lady Violet's youth and beauty, her wealth, her proud position, the sad and sudden death of the earl, her father, all contributed to deepen the sympathy and interest in the so nearly tragic occurrence.

Captain Evelyn was in agony, and made no attempt to conceal it. Beatrix Dudevant hated Lady Violet all the more for that.

"Go to her, please go," he pleaded with Lady Evelyn. "She will welcome you now. Heaven knows I wish I could be with her. Who knows but this is some of Conway's work? Say that you will go to her, aunt; my poor wretched darling. If it were only I, a stout man—but she, so delicate, so dainty, so tender. Won't you go, aunt?"

Lady Evelyn went, and the unhappy captain waited outside for her, with his heart bursting in its sorrow and sympathetic tenderness.

The countess came back as she went. She had not been permitted to see the sufferer, and Captain Evelyn was silenced; but his anguish was increased tenfold.

Of course, Lady Evelyn could not be admitted to the sick room. The drama which was being played there was not eager to parade itself.

"It is very singular that she don't announce her marriage now, and acknowledge Conway as her husband, if that is what he is," Beatrix Dudevant had the hardihood to say that day at dinner.

Nobody answered her. The faces round her turned like stone. No one dared look at Captain Evelyn.

Miss Dudevant went on eating her dinner composedly.

"I suppose he is there yet," she continued, presently; "and, under all the circumstances, if he is not her husband, I should think—"

She did not finish her sentence.

The chill, stern voice of Lord Evelyn interrupted her.

"Miss Dudevant; shall I have the pleasure of taking wine with you?"

The words were nothing. It was his tone and manner, and the servant stood at her elbow with the glass the earl had sent.

She took it, mechanically, in a sort of fright, guessing that she had gone too far, really, for once.

"To the death of all scandal," said the earl, and Miss Dudevant had to accept the sentiment.

The wine must have been gall to her, for she set the glass down, almost untasted, and, wonderful to relate, did not open her lips again all dinner-time.

Lady Violet—or she who was called by that name now—improved as rapidly as could be expected; but long before the fearful burns upon her face were sufficiently healed to permit the bandage to be removed, a solemn ceremonial was performed in one of the stately chambers at Eaglescliffe; an entirely private ceremonial, at which only sufficient witnesses were present to make the matter legal.

These were Misses, and Fidele, Lady Violet's maid.

The gloom among the servants deepened, as the whisper which had been for some time creeping among them became a certainty, and they were made to realise that their young lady had become the wife of the ex-convict.

Scarcely could even the feeling of adoration they had for her, induce in them a tolerably respectful demeanour towards the man she had married.

It was Sparks again, who secured the first information of the marriage.

Miss Dudevant donned her most radiant smiles and attire that evening, and she looked as much out of place in the presence of the sorrowful countenances of the others, as a butterfly would on a rainy day.

Captain Evelyn barely repressed a groan at the sight of her, and escaped by one of the drawing-room windows before she saw him.

His rage and grief he could bear to have his uncle and Lady Evelyn guess at. Miss Dudevant, in his agony, he had forgotten, and had the London belle possessed common delicacy of feeling, or even a modicum of tact she would have avoided him, till he had rallied somewhat from the stunning effect of this last blow.

Instead she watched every opportunity to intrude upon him, and was at every pains to explain to him sweetly, what her relation had been with the deceased Earl of Eaglescliffe.

There was no use in pretending to him that she had not expected to marry Lord Eaglescliffe, but she did have the effrontery to insinuate that she had cared most for him all the time, indeed ever since her shameful treatment of him long ago.

"I don't know how men can be so unforgiving," pouted Beatrix, and Captain Evelyn did not even take the trouble to explain it to her.

CHAPTER XXX.

Nothing occurred for some weeks to interrupt the felicity of the newly-married pair. The surgeon came every day to dress the injured lady's burns, and Conway sat in his wife's beautiful rooms, and played the domestic husband very amiably.

To do him justice, he was already tiring of the past.

None of the country families called at Eaglescliffe, not even the Earl and Countess of Evelyn, though most sent messages of condolence and inquiry to Lady Violet. His existence was entirely ignored by these proud patricians, who deemed that he had outraged a haughty order, by forcing himself through its ranks on the sufferance of a girl who must have been crazy or worse to marry him.

Conway felt the contempt which tainted the atmosphere about him. He read it in the very averted or downcast looks of the menials who served him with such punctilious care of every formal observance, that he had no excuse for swearing at them, or pitching them out of window, as he would have liked to do, by way of venting his spite against everybody.

He knew he was despised, even by Fidele, who always plunged her hands as far as they would go

in the French pockets of her apron, whenever he spoke to her, and dropped her bright marmot eyes, with as sulky an expression as her piquant face was capable of.

Fidèle, indeed, was constantly saying to herself, "He's the very man that broke into the conservatory so many years ago. He'll murder us all next." Conway must have known beforehand how it would be, but he bore it no better for that. Discontent and bitterness filled his soul. His nature was as shallow as it was wicked.

Secure as he apparently was in the fruits of his villany, he was not satisfied with them. His wife had got rid of her bandages, but she wore a thin muslin mask still, and every time he looked at her, his heart, such as it was, rebelled at the sight. Sometimes he almost hated her for the loss of her beauty. He had very soon forgotten that, to that loss as she supposed, he owed the fact of her accepting his pretensions as her husband. But for this loss of her beauty, he would have insisted upon a grand wedding tour in which he could, at least, lavish money right and left, and put on the airs of a grand seigneur. But what pleasure would there be, he argued, in flaunting his new grandeur, with a wife beside him whose hideousness must attract the greater attention? His own disfigured face too—vain as he had been of his good looks once, it angered him almost beyond endurance sometimes when he saw his own reflection in the glass.

On two occasions, indeed, the maids had had to carry away a litter of broken glass from the luxurious dressing-room, that was his now, and one of them had guessed, little knowing how near she came to the truth, that Mr. Conway had put his boot through the costly mirror out of spite.

He lounged one day in the principal room of that beautiful suite of apartments which I have described as Lady Violet's. The conservatory door was ajar, and through it came the tinkle of the fountain, the song of the birds. The window beside which he sat was wide open, showing far stretches of hill and plain, part of the Eaglescliffe estates. Near him, a little back, to keep her linen-masked face out of range of that vision which she had already begun to feel it irritated, his wife leaned upon the same velvet cushion, her arm half-encircling his neck, her fervid glance watching him anxiously.

"You are tired of me already, Vane, do not deny it," she said, gloomily. "You want to go to London to get away from me. But I shall not object. I shall never oppose you in anything."

Conway listened with a lowering brow. He had just announced his intention of making a trip to London, alone. Privately he meant to go farther, if, upon consideration, he concluded it to be safe to do so. His wife's humble acquiescence in the plan, which he had expected she would oppose with spirit, puzzled and disquieted him.

People are seldom so cheated as this man was being, without constantly recurring suspicions of the fact, though their doubts may tend in any but the right direction. It was so with Vane Conway now. All his experience of Lady Violet, both as the spoiled, impulsive child she was at the time of the masked marriage, and as the imperious young countess defying the right he claimed over herself, had been so different from the meekness and submission of his wife.

A hundred times since his marriage had he asked himself if it were possible that a mere accident like this, terrible though it was, could so break that haughty girl's spirit, so change her nature. A hundred times he had recalled Lady Violet's bitter looks and haughty mien, always before this accident, and asked himself if it were possible that she loved him all that time as she said now. He found it difficult to believe that only pride had actuated her then, and so completely vanished afterwards. He was tempted to forego the trip to London, seeing that she consented to his going.

"My lady," he exclaimed, turning sharply and catching her by each slender wrist, "you are playing me a trick; you are cheating me; own it."

He could feel the shiver of uncontrollable terror that ran through her. She knew enough of him to believe that he would almost be ready to murder her, if he knew the truth. The eyes that gleamed through the slits in the muslin mask dilated and darkened with a positive agony of fright for the moment.

Suddenly, with one arm, he drew her to him, and held her forcibly while, in spite of her struggles and cries, he removed the securely-fastened muslin which covered her face. He glanced once at the drawn and distorted features beneath, and released her with an oath. She sank down among the cushions with a cry like some wounded animal, and buried her face among the pillows, moaning.

Conway spoke to her again, presently, with more gentleness. He had still some lingering instincts of

the gentleman which made sight of her distress unpleasant to him.

"I was a fool," he said. "But as I came up through the Park last evening I saw you standing at the window; and at the moment I could have sworn that your face had not a scar upon it. You turned away instantly, and that roused my suspicion. I came here at once, and found you asleep on the lounge there. Miss Miggs sat by you, and she declared that you had been asleep for an hour at least. I could not understand it then, and I do not now. My eyes are not apt to play me such tricks. But that was why I accused you of cheating me, Violet, and I beg your pardon for it."

His wife was quiet now. She extended a hand in token of amity, but she did not lift her head; and Conway presently rose and went away, in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. He had succeeded in persuading himself over night that his eyes had deceived him, but the very contrast of this fearfully distorted face to that exquisite vision of Lady Violet's perfect features, as she had looked before the accident, made the vision seem more real.

The trip to London was not spoken of again for more than a week. But from the hour he looked upon her changed face, Conway's fickle heart grew utterly cold to his wife, though he kept up an outward show of affection.

He was restless and discontented, however, and one morning, almost without warning, he departed.

His wife was wearing her linen mask still. She felt instinctively that he preferred she should, and she hated her own face now too much not to wish to keep it covered from any one who knew her.

She hung round his neck at parting, as though she would never let him go, or as though she thought she should never see him again.

"We were so happy a little while," she sobbed, upon his shoulder; "and now you look as though you hated me. You said it wasn't my beauty you loved me for, but now it is gone, you cannot bear the sight of me."

Conway made some show of an attempt to soothe her, but he drew a deep breath of relief and anticipation when he found himself in the train, speeding to London.

At the termination of his journey he rose eagerly and quitted the carriage. As he stood upon the platform looking about him, a party came hurrying up, evidently in the idea that they were late for a departing train, whereas they were three quarters of an hour too soon. Behind them came a lady and gentleman, also hurrying, the lady closely veiled. Something in the appearance of the lady arrested Conway's wandering glance. The zigzag scar across his face turned livid, his eyes dilated as he took a step forward, and then drew back, watching the pair. They entered the carriage he had just left, and after an interval the gentleman came out again. Conway put his hand within his vest and touched the ebony box which he always carried with him, his eyes glistening. Then he advanced swiftly to the carriage and entered.

The lady sat alone in the first compartment. Her veil was still down, but she started visibly as Conway came in, that evil light shining in his eyes, and sat down beside her.

"You are Eleanor Lyle," he said, in a cold, still voice. "You are going to Eaglescliffe."

The lady did not speak, but he could see that she was trembling violently.

CHAPTER XXXI.

VANE CONWAY'S wife turned back into her room when he was gone. It was rarely indeed that she quitted it. "Shut the door Miggs, and lock it," she said, in a disconsolate tone, and threw herself upon a sofa. "Will you tell my sister he is gone?"

Miggs passed through the sleeping-chamber into the bath-room. From this, a door, which was to all appearance merely a tall mirror, opened into another portion of the house.

The suite of apartments with which this door communicated was situated in that wing of the mansion which was said to be haunted, and was therefore carefully avoided by the servants. These apartments were sumptuously furnished and decorated, like every part of this abode of wealth and luxury, for Eaglescliffe had always been a favourite residence with the earls of that name; Miggs and its present occupant, were all who had entered these rooms of late. Fidèle was kept in attendance upon the wife of Vane Conway, and it is possible in the bewilderment and confusion of the many strange events which had been happening of late, she was as much deceived concerning the identity of her mistress as the rest.

Lady Violet had been reading, but as Miggs having knocked softly, entered, she sat lost in a trance of thought, her book fallen upon her silken lap, and held there by one little jeweled hand. Miggs stood look-

ing at her in a sort of rapture of admiration, as she sat in the low velvet-backed chair, its crimson head-piece throwing into strong relief the perfect outline and colouring of the lovely face that pressed it.

How would Vane Conway have gnashed his teeth with rage for his baffled plots, if he could have looked at that moment within the sumptuous room where the true Lady Violet complacently dreamed like a bird in its bower.

"My lady," said Miggs, at last coming forward.

Lady Violet looked up eagerly, and it was easy to read in the depth of those lustrous eyes, what horror had been swept from her soul of late, in the discovery that Vane Conway had no claim upon her. She rose at once upon receiving the message Miggs brought.

"Is Fidèle out of the way?" she asked.

"She is."

"How does my sister seem?"

"Very low, very low, my lady," and Miggs muttered something to herself.

"What is that, Miggs?" demanded Lady Violet, sweetly, lingering yet.

But Miggs was silent. The meek little governess had come to the vindictive point of wishing to herself that Conway might break his neck while he was gone, and stop the bother.

"I'll tidy up while you're gone, my lady," she said, as the young countess still waited.

"You're a good girl, Miggs, and I appreciate you, and I'll love you next to Daisy all my life for your goodness to her and me now." Lady Violet said, coming back to touch her soft lips to the enraptured governess' pale cheeks.

As she vanished in the direction of the rooms now devoted to her sister, Miggs looked after her with a burst of tears.

"The beautiful darling. Heaven send that the man she is married to, be a better one than that wretch who is breaking her sister's heart," she said.

Lady Violet entered her sister's presence with a disturbed air. This whole affair in which Conway had been so cleverly duped, had never had her approval.

It had been the understanding all along that the deceit having served its purpose, should be abandoned; but Daisy's entreaties and tears still postponed that day.

If Lady Violet had expected to find her in any more reasonable frame of mind now that the man with love of whom she was still so infatuated, had quitted her so heartlessly for a mere pleasure jaunt to London, she soon found her mistake: Daisy, always a weak, childish creature, wrung her hands, and fell into agonies of pleadings, at the mere thought of confessing to her husband that she was that wretched Margaret Dupont, who had been his victim, and whom he believed dead.

"A little longer, dear, dearest Violet—only a little longer," she entreated.

"I don't see the advantage of putting it off," Lady Violet said. "He's a bad man, a desperate one upon occasion, and he is suspicious of trifles. He'll find it all out for himself, and make worse trouble than though we told him."

Daisy shivered. She did not dare tell her sister, but in her own mind, she had horrible fears, of what her husband might do when he found out how he had been tricked.

"He shan't find out, Violet. I'll go to him in London, and you can stay here without fear then of discovery."

"You may depend upon it, Daisy, the best thing that could happen, would be Vane Conway's coming suddenly upon me. We two could have it out together then. You know you would not have a word to say for yourself, if he attacked you first."

"I know it," sighed Daisy. "But he shan't find out anything; indeed he shall not. I'll coax him off to the Continent; and what room is there for him to suspect, so long as he supposes me dead and does not meet you?"

Lady Violet regarded her sister with increasing amazement. To her, such infatuation was more and more incomprehensible. For her, love must go hand in hand with esteem, and to her noble and generous nature it would have been impossible to accept such sacrifices from another as Daisy was exacting from her.

"Do you realise that until your identity is acknowledged, I am worse than a prisoner in my own house?" she asked of her sister, in a voice of mild reproach.

Daisy replied with a burst of sobs:

"But oh! Violet, only think of me. It is the only chance of happiness I ever had."

"I have not thought of myself, Daisy, a single moment. If I had I should never have consented to let this business go on at all. It is placing me in a most ridiculous and doubtful, not to say disgraceful, position. To think of a Countess of Eaglescliffe hiding in her own mansion, as though she were

a criminal. To think of her name going abroad as the wife of a wretch like Vane Conway."

Daisy's eyes watched her sullenly.

"You would have been something worse than his wife if it had not been for me," she said, in a low, scarcely audible voice, and frightened at her own words before she had done saying them.

"Never!"

And Lady Violet's flushed face whitened suddenly. With her passionate temper, the fact that she only uttered that one still word, should be recorded to her credit.

(To be continued.)

LADY BARBARA.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Dora stole out so secretly and abruptly from the lodgings at Lowater Crescent, the one great idea possessing her soul was that of escape from the odious Narra, and from Felix Wamer, who had become no less odious to her.

But, as she hurried out of the Crescent, turning the nearest corner, and discovered that she was not pursued, her speed involuntarily slackened, her thoughts grew calmer, and the question presented itself to her, where was she going?

The question brought her to an abrupt standstill. What friend had she to whom she could go in this her hour of need, and who would shelter and protect her?

Her desolation and helplessness came home to her soul at that moment with a crushing and awful force.

Alone and friendless in the streets of London! She looked up at the houses grimly bordering the street with a vain wishfulness—a homesick longing—that had in it something of the bitterness of death.

"Nowhere to go!" she murmured piteously. "Oh, what shall I do?"

In the midst of her despair, like a ray of sunlight flashing through darkness, came the thought of her rejected lover, the young Mr. Weir of Weir Hall.

"Noel will help me!" she said, her heart leaping with sudden hope. "I will go to him. I know his hotel. He will befriend me."

She quickened her steps, moving forward rapidly. She had gone but a brief distance when she beheld coming down the lonely, nearly deserted street, a light swinging figure, surmounted by a noble, handsome face, now grave and thoughtful in its expression almost to sternness.

It was Mr. Weir.

She recognised him afar off, and wondered within herself, with keen reproach, how she could ever have thought him plain, and how she could ever have preferred to him the feline, courtly and bland Felix Wamer.

Mr. Weir appeared to recognise the young girl at the same moment, despite the concealment afforded by her black veil. No mourning garments could shroud Dora's lithe little figure beyond his recognition.

He approached her, his face kindling, his hands outstretched.

"Dora!" he exclaimed, halting by her side.

"Noel! Oh, Noel!" cried Dora, all her anguish finding expression in that waiting cry.

The young man's face paled.

"What is it, Dora?" he asked. "What has happened?"

Dora put back her veil, revealing her white, tear-stained face and swollen eyes, and regarded him with a piteous appeal that went to his soul.

"Oh, Noel!" she said, her lips quivering. "I have left them. I am alone—all alone!"

"Not alone while I live, Dora," responded the young man, earnestly. "You were going to me?"

"Yes. I had nowhere else to go."

A smile, radiant in its brightness, transfigured the face of Noel Weir. Dora depended upon him then! She turned first to him in her sore strait.

But the smile faded, as Dora dropped her veil, flushing under the scrutiny of some passer-by. Noel drew her arm through his, and conducted her slowly along the street.

They walked on for some time in silence, Dora leaning heavily upon the young man's arm, and feeling a delicious sense of peace and restfulness that was doubly grateful after her late terror and despair.

At length the pair approached Kensington Gardens, at that hour, after five o'clock, alive with gaily-dressed people.

The young squire led Dora to a secluded bench at some distance from the slowly moving throng, seated her, and then, as he sat down beside her, said, with a grave and gentle tenderness:

"We are as much alone, Dora, as if the Gardens were deserted. No one has an eye for us. Now tell me all about it."

Dora drew a moaning sigh, and her tears dropped softly under her veil.

"To begin at the beginning, Noel," she said, "Jack Narra has come."

The young squire uttered an exclamation.

"He came this afternoon," said Dora. "He is what I expected to see him—coarse, vulgar and riotous. He was drunk—"

"My poor Dora!"

"He treated me with a strange mixture of deference and familiarity. He called me Miss Dora, and seemed to regard me as his superior. But that may have been because I am educated, Noel. Education has made a wide gulf between the Narra and me."

"It has only widened a gulf that Nature made, Dora."

"He seemed to feel the distance between us. I have tried to feel a daughter's affection for those people, Noel, but I cannot. There are instincts of the soul which we cannot force. My whole being revolts against them. I cannot call that woman mother. I cannot call that man father. It is as if something within me made me shrink from such a profanity of those holy names. It is an awful step between poor papa and Jack Narra!"

And Dora shuddered.

"A wide step indeed!" sighed the young man.

"He—Jack Narra—came in, as I said," continued Dora, "and was in the midst of a declaration that he meant to be supported by me, or—by my husband, when I should marry—when Felix Wamer came forward from the doorway, where he had been standing long enough to hear what Narra had said—"

"Wamer," interposed the young man, his face flushing. "He has come, then?"

"Yes. He heard what Jack Narra said. Felix Wamer is a bitterly proud man. The sight of the Narra, their coarseness, their vulgarity, Narra's good-natured drunken pompousness, Mrs. Narra's servile insolence—for her manner was both servile and insolent—all disgusted him. The Narra retired to their rear room, and Wamer talked to me for some time, professing his love, yet betraying a strangeness of manner that chilled me. Finally—how can I tell you, Noel!—Wamer told me of his high rank, and said how impossible it was that he could marry the daughter of such disreputable people, and offered me his love and protection at the price of what I prized most on earth—my honour."

Dora flung back her veil at this juncture. There were no tears in her eyes now. They flashed with an unquenchable haughtiness of spirit. The bright scarlet glowed in her cheeks, and a woman's bitterness and indignation showed themselves in every line and feature of her spirited and glorious face.

"He dared insult you thus?" cried Noel Weir, his face darkening with a just anger.

"Yes. He loves me still, after his selfish fashion; but, although he might have wedded the well-portioned daughter of Mr. Chessom, he cannot lower himself to marry the daughter of vagrant Jack Narra! He could not see that, in either case, I am the same girl!"

"He shall answer to me for this!" ejaculated the young man, his ardent young blood flaming.

"No, Noel. You must not quarrel with him. For my sake, don't!" pleaded Dora. "All I have left is my good name. Do not let that be dragged into a quarrel!"

"You are right, Dora," said Noel, with an effort. "The reptile shall go his way. At least, he felt your scorn and indignation?"

"Yes. I ordered him to leave. It seemed as if my love for him had turned to hatred against him—but that was hardly so. I never loved him. I was pleased with him, and flattered by his attentions—nothing more. But I loathed him as he stood there, daring to pollute my ears with his words. Before he could go, the Narra came in. Calculating upon their baseness, Wamer told them of his proposition to me. The woman invited him to have a conference with her on the subject. She seemed willing to take his gold—"

"Monstrous!" ejaculated the young squire.

"I went into my room, a sense of my danger overwhelming me. I saw that I must escape, and at once. And so I stole out, without a thought of where I was going, and had just decided to go to you when I saw you. There is my story, Noel. Now what am I to do?"

She looked at him with an infinite trust and reliance, her dark eyes glowing like lighted lamps. She moved a little nearer to him.

"Papa trusted you, Noel," she whispered. "You will be my friend now, won't you?"

The young man returned her gaze with one of

love and tenderness too great for words, and he answered, in a choking voice:

"Dora, I will be your friend and brother, and may Heaven deal with me as I deal with you. I will not take advantage of your desolation to urge you to reconsider your decision against me, but I assure you I would more than ever esteem it an honour if you would become my wife. But we will not talk of that now. Do not think of me as your lover or suitor, but regard me as your brother whose greatest happiness is to care for you."

"Thank you, Noel," said the girl, lowly. "We will be sister and brother."

"Then the first use I shall make of my brotherly influence will be to advise you to adhere to your determination and not return to the Narra. You have received a timely warning of their character, and your safety lies in keeping away from them. There can be no question, Dora, that, if they find you, they can compel you to return to them. The law gives them control over an unmarried daughter who is under age."

"Where am I to go, Noel?"

"Mr. Chessom gave you a letter to his promised wife, Miss Coningsby, in Russell Square. This Miss Coningsby is still young, of course. She must have a woman's heart. Go to her first of all, Dora, and tell her all your story. She may obtain for you a situation as resident governess in her own family, or that of some friend, and once installed in such a situation it will be almost impossible for the Narra or Wamer to trace you. What do you think of the project?"

"It strikes me favourably. It is the best thing I can do. But if she refuses to befriend me, Noel?"

"I have just engaged rooms in a good lodging-house, so as to be near you," replied the young man. "I will give them up to you and go back to my hotel. And then we will consider what is next to be done."

"I must see Miss Coningsby to-day, Noel," exclaimed Dora. "I see that the sooner I am settled in a secure home, the better it will be for me. Can we not go to Russell Square immediately?"

Squire Weir assented, and Dora lowered her veil and arose, taking his proffered arm.

They passed out of the Gardens and along the street. Noel soon signalled an empty cab, the young pair entered it, and the order was given to drive to Russell Square.

The young squire exerted himself to cheer Dora, and he was so far successful that she was quite self-possessed and calm when at last the cab, according to Weir's directions, halted at the corner of the square.

"I will remain here while you are gone," said the young man. "It might not do if I were seen awaiting you in front of the door, and I dare not lose sight of you. You know the number, Dora. If Miss Coningsby will befriend you, you need only to come and tell me, or to send me a message."

The cabman opened the door, and Dora stepped out, hurrying along the square to the proper number.

The young squire looked after her with a yearning tenderness, his sad eyes beaming with a look of ineffable love and patience.

"She never loved Wamer," he said to himself. "Perhaps I may yet win her to be my wife—my noble, spirited, glorious Dora! If I could but win her love!"

And he sighed deeply.

Meanwhile Dora had discovered the number she sought, had mounted the steps, and sounded the knocker thrice, heavily.

A servant presently admitted her, and ushered her into a sombre drawing-room, saying, in response to Dora's inquiry, that Miss Coningsby was at home.

Dora took from her pocket-book a card, on which was written the name she had always borne, and sent it to the lady. She then took possession of a stuffed chair, and awaited, with a wildly beating heart, the lady's arrival.

Mr. Coningsby was a solicitor, who had acquired, partly by inheritance, partly by marriage, and partly by his own efforts, a comfortable property. It was understood that his eldest daughter—the betrothed wife of Edmund Chessom—would have a handsome dowry. He was a widower, and Miss Coningsby presided over his household, and superintended the care of his younger children, who were also provided with a resident governess.

Of these facts Dora was utterly ignorant. Edmund Chessom had said little to enlighten her concerning the family to which he had proposed to ally himself.

The minutes passed wearily in waiting, and a half hour dragged slowly away.

Dora grew restless and impatient.

"Miss Coningsby is not well-bred," she thought half resentfully, "to keep me waiting so long. Poor Noel! He will tire of waiting for me!"

At last, however, the clicking of boot-heels on the tiles forming the hall floor, and the rustling of silk, were heard, and then the door of the dim and sombre apartment opened, and Miss Coningsby swept into the room.

She was a fair, plump woman, of some five-and-twenty years, tall, with a supercilious carriage and manner, that quite spoiled her good looks. She was attired in a dinner costume of rose-coloured tissue over silk, and her dress was as remarkable for the length of its train as for the extreme lowness of the corsage and the shortness of its sleeves.

No greater contrast could have been conceived than she presented to her light, girlish visitor, with the exquisite flower-like face and bright appealing eyes.

Miss Coningsby held in her plump, jewelled hand, Dora's card. She looked at it and the girl doubtfully.

"You are the—the young person who sent me this card?" she questioned superciliously.

Dora arose, bowing assent.

"Resume your seat, Miss—Miss Narr!" said Miss Coningsby, sinking languidly upon a sofa near. "I was rather surprised at your retaining a name to which, as I understand, you are not entitled. Your real name, Mr. Chessom informs me, is Narr!"

Dora's cheeks flushed, as she sat down again. "Squire Chessom adopted me as his daughter, madam," said she quietly, "and gave me his name. It is a gift from which I cannot lightly part."

"Ah! But have you not considered how unpleasant it may be for those to whom the name rightfully belongs to have it dragged through the associations which must now be yours? Is it just to Mr. Chessom to retain his name—to pass yourself off as his sister?"

Dora's face flushed yet more hotly.

"I have never uttered his name to any one since I left the Grange, madam," she replied, with effort controlling her own spirit. "Mr. Chessom is not my brother, and I have no wish to claim him as such, although his father was a father to me."

"Ah, yes," said Miss Coningsby, with a fashionable drawl, "I have heard that the eccentric old squire was your benefactor. But, of course, as he is dead, your connection with the family ceases. Mr. Chessom, however, with a kindness that does him credit, has written to me to beg me to interest myself in your fortunes. He informs me that the eccentric squire lavished a vast amount of money upon your education, and that you will, of course, choose to support yourself and your mother. It is about this, I presume, that you have called upon me to-day?"

"Yes, madam," replied Dora, with a quiet self-respect which Miss Coningsby did not seem to like. "I am competent to teach the English branches, French, German, and music. You will find me a conscientious teacher."

"Oh, I don't doubt that," drawled Miss Coningsby. "You ought to be conscientious, and all that, when you are a paid for it. I can give you two music pupils—my sisters—three French pupils, including my sisters and my young brother. I will also recommend you to my friends, but only upon the condition that you take your real name and call yourself Narr."

"But that name is distasteful to me," said Dora, hesitatingly.

Miss Coningsby arched her brows.

"Distasteful! Your own name! Of course, it is not so finely sounding as Chessom, but then it's your own. I cannot consent to impose upon people a teacher under a false name, nor can I introduce a music-teacher under a name I expect to bear at some future time. It is quite impossible."

Dora's heart sunk. To give up the name the old squire had bestowed upon her seemed like snapping the last link that held her to the happy past.

Miss Coningsby watched the changes in Dora's face, as a boy watches the struggles of a fly he has impaled on the wall.

"Well?" she questioned, impatiently. "You know now the only condition upon which I can assist you. What have you to say?"

"Let me tell you my story first, madam," exclaimed Dora, impetuously. "You must have a heart to feel for one of your own sex, beset with difficulties and in sore trouble."

"Be brief, then," said Miss Coningsby, with barely perceptible curiosity, looking at her watch.

Dora hastened to tell her story, beginning from the point of leaving the Grange. All the fire and impetuosity of her nature leaped into her face, manner, and voice, as she told of the Narrs, of Wamoor, and of Noel Weir. Her beauty and loveliness became fairly radiant under her excitement, and she passed from anger to pathos, from indignation to pleading, with unconscious rapidity and with childlike ease.

"You see, madam, the danger I would be in if I remain with the Narrs," she said, in conclusion. "It

is impossible for me to remain with them longer. Will you not give me a shelter—a home?"

"My sisters are already provided with a resident governess," said Miss Coningsby, untouched by Dora's narration; "a staid, respectable woman of mature age. Of course, I cannot discharge her."

"But will you not recommend me to someone who may be in want of a governess?" asked Dora.

"I cannot do that conscientiously," said the lady, coldly. "In the first place, I cannot give credence to your story. It is impossible that a mother should be willing to consign her child to a life of dishonour. You must have exaggerated the facts. Of course, no gentleman—especially one allied to a noble family—would marry a vagrant's daughter. But if he made you vile propositions, you should simply dismiss him with dignity. Your place, Miss Narr, is with your parents. A mother is her daughter's best guardian."

"Such a mother?"

"I have only the word of a discontented young girl that she is bad! I doubt that she is vile. Mr. Chessom spoke of her as a very decent person."

"I doubt if she is my mother," said Dora, bitterly. "Papa fancied that I might have been her nurse-child, kept as her own, and in the place of her own."

"Worse and worse!" exclaimed Miss Coningsby, with a look of shocked propriety. "It is plain, Miss Narr, that you are a romantic young person with a very ill-balanced mind. I have always thought it a poor plan to take a child out of the lower ranks and educate it like one of the upper class, and my idea is now confirmed. You had better return to your mother at once, and assume, as you have not yet done, a filial relation to her. You must not presume on your better education, better manners, better associations, but sink quietly to the level from which Mr. Chessom's ill-advised charity raised you."

"Madam," said Dora, patiently, "I do not despise the Narrs because they are poor and uneducated, but I do despise them because they are base! I cannot respect them, nor like them. Heaven knows that I would be proud of the poorest and humblest parent, if that parent were honest, sober, and virtuous. But my soul recoils from them!"

"You will have to come to liking them!" remarked Miss Coningsby, with severity. "I am shocked at you, Miss Narr. I call your conduct highly disgraceful. This Mr. Weir is no fit associate for you, and by going about with him you are ruining your good name!"

"He is my best friend."

"More likely he is the wolf, and your parents the innocent ones. He is inciting you to a rebellion against your parents, who are your lawful protectors. You are a romantic, headstrong, ill-advised girl, and you should return at once to your mother. Whatever her faults, however low she may be, she is your mother!"

"I don't believe it!" cried Dora. "I can't believe it!"

"This to me!" cried Miss Coningsby, with increasing severity. "Unhappy girl, you are travelling swiftly the downward road! I shall write to Mr. Chessom at once, telling him of the unfortunate course you have taken. Unless you give up your Mr. Weir, assume your real name, and live with your parents, I utterly decline to assist you in any way! When you can come to me in humility as Dora Narr, and tell me that you are living with your parents in filial obedience, and that you wish to work for them, then, and not till then, will I assist you!"

She arose, severe, cold, and supercilious. Dora arose also.

"You refuse to believe me, then, madam?" she said, her pure, sweet face pale and piteous.

"I do."

"May Heaven forgive you for turning away one who sorely needed help," said the girl, in a quivering voice.

Miss Coningsby made no response, save to say coldly, with great stress on the name:

"Good evening, Miss Narr!"

Dora replied with a gentle dignity and self-respect, and went out of the room and out of the house. She halted on the steps, noting the cab at the corner, in which the young man was awaiting her.

At the same moment she marked a man lounging against the area-railing of the Coningsby's dwelling—a man whose face of low cunning, under a shock of red hair, proclaimed him to be Jack Narr.

At sight of her, Narr's face lighted up with a sinister exultation.

"Caught my bird the first time trying!" he cried. "The old woman was right! She thought you'd make for this! Come along, Miss Dora, I'm your father, and if you cry out or resist me, I'll call a p'leeceman!"

He stood at the bottom of the steps and held out his arms to intercept her.

CHAPTER XVI.

At first Lord Champney paid no heed to the drooping figure and despairing attitude of the Lady Barbara, as she leaned against the low stone balustrade, and watched him sail away into the bright sunshine flooding the summer sea, but at last he looked back at her.

She caught his gaze, and held out her arms to him in a wild imploring.

His lordship's lips curled savagely. A wild gleam shot from his eyes.

"She thinks to call me back!" he muttered, under his breath. "She is afraid I will harm her darling colonel! By Heaven! when she looks on him again, she will look on his lifeless corpse!"

He clutched the tiller so tightly that the veins started in bold relief on his hands.

"I could almost curse her!" he said. "She is as fatal and alluring as one of those false beacons the wreckers light on their treacherous shores. And I love her! I, her husband, who am going to avenge myself upon this colonel, whose love-letter to her lies in my bosom! First, to destroy him! And then—"

He set his lips together tightly, and an awful shadow fell upon his face.

The woman on the cliff caught up from a bench near her a sea-glass, and scrutinised him with despairing earnestness through its magnifying lens.

She marked that look and shadow on his features, and her despair deepened into a wild foreboding and terror.

"There is murder in his heart!" she thought. "Poor noble, misguided Sidney! The colonel is an unerring shot, and as cool as a smiling demon. He will kill Sidney, and say he did it in self defence! Oh, my husband! Or, Sidney may by some chance kill his enemy, and he will then be arrested for murder, our unhappy trouble become the talk of all England, and, worse than all, Sidney will suffer the penalty of his crime! I must save him—but how?"

She thought the matter over quickly.

She could not go to Cromer and warn the colonel, nor beg him to flee. It was too late to make a further appeal to Lord Champney. All she could do would be to write a note to the infamous Effingham, begging him to keep out of her husband's way, else murder would be done.

Drawing a note-book from her pocket, she hastened to write the note in guarded language, on a leaf in her book, tore the leaf out, and hastened into the house for an envelope. This was soon found, the leaf enclosed and sealed, and duly addressed, and the Lady Barbara then went out into the rose-garden in search of the gardener's son—a lad of twelve—who had often served her as a page.

The boy, a bright and keen little fellow, was soon found.

The Lady Barbara addressed him on the subject with simple directness.

"My lad," she said, "you go over to Cromer twice a week. Have you ever seen an officer there called Colonel Effingham?"

"The one with the fine uniform, my lady, and the coal-black horse?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Yes; do you know where he lodges?"

"Yes, my lady. He was here, in the grounds, to day. I saw him myself!"

"I want you to go to Cromer immediately, and give this note into the hands of Colonel Effingham. Make haste, my boy. If it reaches him in time, you shall have a bright, new sovereign. Take the roan horse—he's the swiftest—and go by the shortest route. This is a matter of life and death! And remember, boy, that I want you to be secret!"

Her looks and her manner impressed the lad even more than her words.

He took the note, hiding it in his bosom, and promised implicit obedience to her commands. Then he hurried to the stables, saddled the roan horse, and in a few minutes more was flying away on his errand at a break-neck speed.

The Lady Barbara returned to the cliff and the sea-glass.

By this time the boat was well out upon the sunlit waters. Her ladyship watched its progress with a yearning gaze.

And while she was thus absorbed in plans for compassing his safety, Lord Champney was thinking of her and of Effingham with an awful bitterness and wrath.

He sat in his boat as grimly as a carved figure-head, but within his soul his unceasing passions raged like so many unloosed demons.

"Why," said he to himself, with a bitter scorn his eyes flaming, "there have been times since I came back to Saltair that I have doubted that woman's guilt! She's such a consummate hypocrite! And all the while she was carrying on a love correspondence with this Effingham, who has the worst reputation of any man in England! Why, they talk

of kicking him out of the army, for ruining so many homes; and yet Barbara Champney, who used to be the most high-minded, pure and noble woman in the world—Barbara Champney is one of his hundred loves! It is enough to drive a cooler man than I am to utter frenzy! I'll kill him as I'd kill a raging wild beast!"

The more Lord Champney brooded over his supposed wrongs the wilder with rage he grew.

By the time his journey approached termination he was deathly calm, but none the less full of his deadly purpose.

He sailed past the light-house and on through Cromer Bay, or "the devil's throat," as the bay has been named by the fishermen, on account of the perils of its navigation, and finally stranded upon the open beach, where two or three vessels were loading and unloading, and where a few fisher craft were drawn up, lying in the broad sunshine.

Lord Champney leaped out upon the beach, and strode up the nearest street, unheeding the offers of a crippled individual who offered to guide him to the ruins of the ancient walls and abbey, to the Tudor church and other objects of interest, all for a sum incredibly and absurdly small.

Stopping at a tobacconist's—one who combined with his trade that of news-dealer—Lord Champney inquired the address of Colonel Effingham. He found that the army officer was well known at that establishment, and had no difficulty in obtaining the information he sought.

He then proceeded to Effingham's hotel.

As he gained it, a lad rode out of the courtyard on a paunting roan horse, which seemed to have been ridden hard, and which showed signs of great fatigue, despite an evident brief rest.

Lord Champney recognised both horse and rider at once.

The lad, who was, of course, Lady Barbara's messenger, and who had arrived at the hotel twenty minutes since, and had safely delivered her ladyship's note—mindful of the trust reposed in him, and of the injunction to secrecy, as well as of the promised golden sovereign, endeavoured to slink out of Lord Champney's sight, but his horse did not move quick enough.

His lordship caught the horse by the bridle, and demanded the business of the young rider.

"I come of an errand, my lord!" was the non-committal response.

"What errand?"

"Can't my lady's seamstress want a reel of thread nor nothing?" asked the lad suddenly. "I has to come every day for Miss Ada, that I do! I ain't done nothing, my lord, to be scolded on!" and the wise young lad commenced to whimper.

His lordship released the bridle at once.

"Go on," he said, quietly. "Obey your orders. I have nothing to say to you."

He went into the hotel, the lad, rejoicing at his escape from the master he held greatly in awe, starting for home.

His lordship inquired of the clerk the number of Colonel Effingham's rooms, and also whether the colonel was in.

"He was, half an hour since, my lord," replied the clerk, with a quick guess at the identity of his questioner. "He must be upstairs now. I will send a messenger up to see, my lord."

"No. I will go up myself. You think he's in?"

"He is generally in at this hour, my lord. He came in half an hour ago, with his black horse rather hard ridden, and he'll hardly go out again till evening, my lord."

Lord Champney loiteringly departed, and made his way to the upper floor, soon finding the number of Effingham's room.

He knocked on the door. No one answered.

He knocked more loudly, and then turned the knob.

The door was unlocked. He went in.

The room was unoccupied.

The window was open, and the sea-breeze filled the chamber with a delicious coolness.

The bed stood in a recess, shut off by dimity curtains, and all about the room were evidences of the colonel's occupancy. Riding whips of various patterns, some with jewelled handles, littered the mantelpiece. Swords, gilt spurs, shoulder-straps, strips of gold lace and metal buttons were mingled on the table with pipes of every description, jars of tobacco, boxes of cigars, and empty bottles. Half across a chair and half on the floor, as if recently cast there, was an officer's coat.

"It's easy to judge the man's character by his room," thought Lord Champney, his lip curling.

He looked yet more narrowly around him.

And then he perceived on the floor, where it seemed to have fallen in a hasty departure, a note—the note the Lady Barbara had written to Effingham to secure her husband's safety or his life.

Mechanically Lord Champney picked up the note

The envelope was torn across as if the recipient had been overcome with eagerness on seeing it. The note fell out of its torn receptacle.

Still mechanically Lord Champney unfolded the hasty scrawl, written in pencil on the leaf of a note-book.

As the reader knows, the missive contained only an urgent entreaty of the colonel to keep out of Champney's sight, lest murder be done.

His lordship read it through, scarcely conscious of what he was doing.

"Poor girl!" he muttered, when he had finished it. "Poor Barbara! How she loves him! She was afraid I would harm him!"

He felt suddenly enfeebled, and sat down by the table, toying with a silver-mounted pistol that lay amid the rubbish.

And then with the rapidity of light his mood changed. He seemed to wake up out of a horrible trance that had held his senses since the moment of perceiving the letter.

"Poor girl!" he repeated, with an infinite scorn. "Vile traitress! I should have said. She has betrayed me to that wretch; and he, the coward, in obedience to her command, has fled. But he won't keep out of sight long. He's got fire somewhere in his blood, or he could not have fought so many duels. I'll bring that fire to the surface!"

He arose and went to a smaller table, on which lay an open dispatch box.

Upon this box lay a sheet of tinted paper, delicately scented on which was written a date, and the words, "My own Barbara."

"Ah, he had begun to write to her when the lad came, and he chose to make his escape!" exclaimed Lord Champney, scowling darkly. "I shall exact a fearful revenge for all these things!"

He little dreamed that the note had been left purposely on the floor, and the dispatch-box arranged to catch his eye. He little dreamed—noble, faulty, generous soul—that he was the dupe and plaything of a crafty enemy who knew his weaknesses, and played upon them to further his own purposes—to widen the breach between the husband and wife, that he might in some way bring himself nearer the latter.

Lord Champney turned the dispatch-box upside down, and emptied out its contents. Then, darkly and grimly, he examined these slowly.

They had been well prepared for his eyes.

A bunch of withered violets, tied together with ribbon, and labelled in tiny letters, "From the Lady of Saltair," first attracted the jealous husband's gaze.

Next a photograph of the Lady Barbara, which Effingham had procured in town of a photographic artist whom the ladyship had employed—a nefarious mode of gaining possession of which Lord Champney was himself too true a gentleman to suspect his enemy—came to light. This picture was set in a jewelled frame, and on the card was written:

"The picture of my darling."

"His darling!" hissed Lord Champney. "I'll see!" He extracted the photograph, and tore it into a hundred tiny bits. Then he flung the jewelled frame on the ground, and crushed it under his boot heel.

There were other flowers, a couple of notes, purporting to have been written by the Lady Barbara, in which allusion was made to the "odious chains that bound her to one whom she hated, and whose jealousies poisoned her existence."

"They may well 'poison her existence,'" muttered the unhappy husband. "The fiend! The double-faced hypocrite! She will have a harder time in the future, I can promise her. I'll be a Nemesis to her—the avenger of my own murdered happiness."

Having looked over the remaining contents of the box, and found them of no importance, his lordship took up the sheet on which a letter appeared to have been begun to his wife, and wrote in large letters upon it:

"Villain and coward! You have run away to avoid a meeting with me! Meet me to-morrow at Cranny Beach, near Saltair, at noon, and give me satisfaction at the point of the sword, or I will brand you as a coward and a villain throughout Great Britain! I'll send the story of your cowardice to the papers, to your club, to your regiment! And the first time we meet I'll horsewhip you and give you the chastisement you deserve!"

Lord Champney read this challenge over with a savage glee.

"That will bring him out!" he muttered. "He prides himself on his bravery! He'll abandon love and all to save his honour! Either he or I will die to-morrow, and I don't care which," added his lordship, recklessly. "But while I live no one shall ride over me roughshod! Yes, to-morrow the Lady Barbara Champney will lose either her husband or her lover!"

He took up his challenge and went to the mantle-

piece. Picking up a sword from the litter on the shelf, he pinned the document to the wall with the point of the sword, and stalked out of the room. "To-morrow!" he said, to himself, savagely, as he went down the stairs. "To-morrow!"

(To be continued.)

THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER.

In all the fishing fleet along the entire coast, there was not to be found so neat and taut a craft as the Spray. At the time, and in the remote place of which we write, but little attention was ordinarily paid by the fishermen to the embellishment of their smacks. So that they were staunch and seaworthy, the shapely build, the symmetrical rig, and the adornment of paint were not of the slightest possible consequence.

The little schooner which formed the subject of remark presented a marked contrast to the dingy, rough-looking craft around her, in her well-proportioned and cleanly-scrapped spars, in the set of her rigging, in the neatly-painted hull, and the orderly adjustment of everything about her deck; and could we take a look into her cabin, we should find there the same exhibition of neatness, taste, and order.

The owner of such a fine-looking vessel as the Spray, and so fine-looking himself withal—young, forehanded, and blessed with a sunny disposition—was a prize that did not offer every day, and all the girls set their caps for him.

All but one—Mary Dyer. Modest, retiring, with but humble self-appreciation, she did not venture to aspire to what she considered was beyond her reach, nor would her self-respect permit her to resort to the little stratagems which many of her companions employed to entrap the unsuspecting Robert Jordan.

How the matter was brought about Mary scarcely knew herself, it had come to pass so naturally, without any seeking on her part, without any passionate demonstration. She only knew when it was all over that she was supremely happy—so happy that she almost doubted its reality.

The Spray had gone on a fishing cruise, at the close of which her skipper was to take to his home the chosen partner of his life. She had been quite successful, and was on her return, when the threatening state of the weather induced her master to put into the little port where the attention of the reader was first called to her.

Impatient as Robert was to reach home, the appearance of the weather made him hesitate about trusting to the favourable change.

"What do you think of it, Father McIntire," said Jordan, appealing to the skipper of the only remaining vessel besides his own—an old weather-beaten sea-dog, whose life had been spent on the ocean—"would it be prudent to venture out?"

"I don't know," said the old man, gravely shaking his head; "the light has a sickly look, and I'm dubious—I'm dubious. Howsomever," he added, "we might try it."

"We'll start," was the decisive rejoinder. As the two retraced their steps, the old man remarked:

"My old craft yonder has a homely look alongside your'n; but handsome is that handsome does. I've tried her in all weathers, blow high and blow low, on a lee shore and scudding afore it, and I've yet to see a better behaved boat than the Sally Ann, rough as she appears. I'm saying nothing again the Spray, Skipper Jordan," added the old fellow, apologetically, "she's a jimmy-looking craft, and I dare say her looks don't belie her; but then, you know, fine feathers don't always make fine birds."

For a week the aspect of the weather had been threatening. For a week the wind had been changing from point to point with great inconsistency.

Day after day—many times throughout the day since the storm threatened—the form of a young woman could be seen on the rocky promontory her gaze intently directed seaward. Often she was accompanied by an old man, who with a ship's glass would slowly sweep the horizon. The watchers were Mary Dyer and her father—the object for which they were watching was the long-expected Spray.

At a little past noon on the day when the storm seemed to have fairly set in, the old man and his daughter stood on the accustomed look-out. A wild scene was presented to them as they turned their gaze eastward.

Afar off on the edge of the horizon, stretching along for some distance, the water was seething milk-white. It was caused by the billows breaking over the "Hummocks," as some styled them—a sunken reef, or series of reefs, fathoms deep in ordinary weather, so that the largest ship could pass over them in safety. It was only when the storm spirit was about—when the ocean was unusually disturbed—that their existence was revealed, and then they

would break with great fury, the ghastly foam leaping maddest high.

It was not a novel scene to the maiden. From her childhood she had been familiar with similar spectacles, and accustomed to look upon them with indifference. Sea, no—no cry—not with indifference, for common as was the scene, she never witnessed these sublime manifestations of elemental strife without a quickening of the pulse—an excitement of feeling—a mingled emotion of awe and admiration; nor without being impressed with His majesty and might, who said to the rebellious sea: "Thus far shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed"—at whose rebuke, "Peace, be still!" the angry billows shrank abashed.

With emotions that never before agitated her breast, the maiden now surveyed the scene. The pallor of her face and the anxiety depicted in her countenance betrayed the depth of her interest. As the strong wind swept by in fitful gusts and the hoarse voice of the sea filled her ears, and the white caps of the waves flashed on her sight, heavier grew the sadness that weighed down her heart, and more despairing the expression of her features.

"Oh, father," with trembling lips and broken voice the maiden appealed to her companion, "where can she be?"

"Safe, safe, my child, let us hope and pray!" rejoined the father, gazing compassionately on his daughter, for a terrible fear was working at his heart.

"But can she live in such a storm as this?" was again the anxious inquiry of the maiden.

"Yes, my daughter," he replied, in more assured tones. "I have been out in tougher storms than this, and in a craft not near so staunch as the Spray. A better boat never swam, and a cooler head and steadier hand you cannot find than Robert's."

While he was speaking, the eyes of the maiden still continued to scan the dim horizon, and as he ceased, she exclaimed, in eager, hopeful tones:

"Look, look, father!—there to the north-east—I see a sail!" and she pointed excitedly in the direction.

The old man raised his glass and took a careful gaze.

"Your eyes must have deceived you, child," he replied after a while. "I see nothing; it must have been the crest of a wave."

"No, father, no; there it is again! It is a sail; I am sure it is. Wait, wait," she hurriedly added, "she is in the trough of the sea. There she rises! cannot you see her now?" and her hand trembled as she pointed it in the direction.

The old man gazed long and intently, then said in a grave voice:

"Yes, my child, you're right; I have caught it—it is a sail. Yes, and now I have got the masts, but they are not the Spray's."

"Not the Spray's?" repeated Mary, in a faltering voice, the glow of excitement fading from her cheeks, and a shadow of disappointment clouding her features.

"Her masts were bright, and tipped with white," continued the old man, "but these are black."

"Are you sure, father?" asked the daughter, sadly and hopelessly.

"Black," added the old man, still sighting the vessel, "and I reckon yonder's the Sally Ann. Skipper McIntyre has been long overdue. Cheer up, my lass," he went on, as he lowered the glass, placing his hand on his daughter's shoulder, "the Spray, very likely, is not far off; maybe we shall get some news of her."

"I fear they will be sad tidings, father," said the young girl despondingly, as, seating herself in the shelter of a rock, she buried her face in her hands, grieving over the destruction of her suddenly-raised hopes.

While she sat there the old man was watching the approaching sail, staggering along under a mere rag of sail, one half the time hidden from sight by the engulfing billows. At times he would direct his glass to different points. Presently, after gazing long and fixedly in one direction, he shouted with a cheery voice:

"Sail ho!"

The maiden started to her feet, and hurried to his side.

"A sail, did you say, father; another sail?" she questioned, in tones agitated and broken.

"Yes, there she is in the south-eastern board; broad off there, on the edge of the Hummocks; and—yes, yes, it is the Spray! But how came she off there?" he said, in a subdued voice. "Here, take the glass, Mary; you will see it is Robert."

But the quick, sharp-sighted maiden's unassisted eye was sufficient. The coming sail was soon discovered, no bigger than a bird's wing; and love's instinct taught her that it was the long-watched, long-awaited for.

Radiant with new-born happiness, every feature kindled with rapturous joy, her eyes beaming with almost a divine lustre, her lips tremulous with suppressed emotion, her abundant chestnut tresses the sport of the wind, her gracefully-poised attitude, as if in the act of flying to the embrace of the beloved—rarely will you see an object more faultlessly beautiful than was that young girl, thus suddenly aroused from her dreamy reverie—translated, as it were, from the gloomy depths of despondency to the sunny summits of hope and expectation.

The tidings soon spread through the little community that two sail were in the offing, and ere long the bluff, where the most unobstructed view can be had, was the grand point of attraction. The prolonged absence of the Spray, and we may add, the Sally Ann, had excited not a little apprehension for their safety, and the rumour that they were in sight seemed to awaken in all a personal interest.

Heavier swelled the gale as the day wore on, and staggering dead before it, the masts springing like whip-sticks as she plunged through the surges, on came the Sally Ann, abundantly verifying her skipper's boast of her sea-going qualities. Ere long, wading in foam, she shot by the cliff, rounded handsomely into the passage, greeted by the welcoming shouts of the watching multitude, and soon reposed, after her fierce tempest struggle, quietly at anchor.

"I do not see the Spray," was the skipper's first remark on stepping ashore from his dory. "I expected to find him here."

On being told that she was in the offing he joined the group on the bluff.

"I wonder what he is doing off there?" said one of the party, pointing to the Spray, which, close hauled on the wind, was endeavouring to weather the low island that lay off the port.

"I don't understand it," remarked Skipper McIntyre. "We were in company at daylight this morning, but suddenly he changed his course and bore away to the south-east, and I soon lost sight of him. Had he kept to his original course he would have been in some hours ago, for he had considerable the lead of me."

The attention of all on the look-out was now centered on the approaching vessel, which was bravely making her way, though labouring badly. What was there in the looks and tones of the men who conversed apart in subdued voices, pointing significantly to the little vessel and shaking their heads, that struck a chill to the heart of the lately overjoyed maiden, banishing the glow from her cheek and dimming the fire in her eye? She had calculated the hours, the minutes, when she should welcome her betrothed safely on shore—calculated as if it were a certain thing. What new peril threatened him? Why did the men wear such grave looks as they spoke together in low tones?

True, the gale was violent—was increasing in violence; true, the sea ran high, fearfully high; but her father had told her that he had been out in a worse storm, and in a boat less sea-worthy than the Spray; what occasion, then, was there for fear? Ah, but she forgot that her father had told her this some two hours before, since when the wind came in fiercer blasts, since when the tide had set in, and the waves were swollen in bulk, and came thundering to the shore with vastly accelerated momentum.

Had the Spray a clear course before her, she would soon have found her way to her anchorage, sheltered from the tempest raging outside her haven. The maiden did not take into account that this course was barred to her; that she was struggling to weather the little island abreast the port; that if she ran or was driven to the leeward her case was hopeless, for a lee shore threatened her; and that her salvation depended on the success of the attempt she was now making.

Although the maiden was ignorant of all this, yet she instinctively gathered enough from the looks, actions, and muttered exclamations of those around her, that her lover was in deadly peril—in deadly peril almost within sight of his home—within view of friends and neighbours, impotent to render him the slightest assistance. Her fears magnified his danger, great as it was, and often she would withdraw her gaze from the storm-beaten vessel, and with a pale, terror-stricken face and anxious eyes consult the looks of those clustered on the spot, striving to catch a gleam of hope from them; but, alas! they afforded her not a ray of encouragement.

The Spray was now approaching the outer point of the island, her every movement watched with breathless interest.

"By heavens! she hugs the wind bravely," said an old fisherman in admiring tones; "a little more

sail would help her greatly—possibly take her clear; but she would not stand it."

"Stand it or not, he's going to try it!" exclaimed another. "See, he is shaking out a reef! It is his only salvation. Heaven help him in his extremity!"

The excitement on the bluff now became intense—manifested in looks, not words, as they watched the effects of the forlorn experiment.

"It is too much for her; she cannot stand it!"

"Ah—she's gone!"

"No, no, she rights; she rights!"

Such were the whispered utterances as the spectators stood, every faculty absorbed in the fate of the imperilled little craft.

A moment of unbroken silence, of thrilling suspense, and then a cheerful shout burst from the lips of all, as the Spray shot by the dangerous point, in the very jaws of the breakers—emerging as it seemed from the very rack of foam, and laid her course for the entrance to the harbour.

"Is he safe, father?" asked Mary, in a faint voice, for in the critical moment the intensity of her feelings so wrought upon her that her senses swam, and she was on the verge of unconsciousness, when the sudden cheer aroused her.

"He has weathered the point, and let us hope that the worst is over."

He did not speak so assuredly as his daughter anticipated—as the animation of the group about her seemed to warrant. She turned upon him an anxious, inquiring look.

"The rain begins to fall, my child," he said, as if avoiding the mute question, stooping to shield his daughter, as an angry blast swept shrieking by, and the great drops beat upon them; "let us go home; we can do no good here."

"I cannot go, father—I cannot—while he is in danger!" was her agitated reply. "Let us remain; I do not mind the rain; let us stay until assured of his safety. See, father! how near he is; he will soon be here—soon be safe!" she added, with forced animation, a sickly smile lighting up her countenance for a moment.

"God grant that he may!" responded the old man fervently, but in a sad, subdued voice, as he turned to look at the vessel.

She was making her way rapidly, notwithstanding the tremendous sea running, which at times nearly buried her as she plunged into the watery chasms that evermore yawned before her.

Heavier came on the gale—fiercer swelled the blasts, almost wresting the spectators on the bluff from their foothold; and more mountainous rose the waves as they approached the shore, their green liquid walls flecked with white, curving and crusted with an angry spume.

We have mentioned a ledge that made out on the left as you entered the harbour. Just around the point, from which the ledge extends there is a deep cove-like indentation of the coast, where, protected by the high land, the sea was comparatively quiet, although the billows, broken and crossing each other, caused what the Cape folks styled an "ugly swash."

But over and about the ledge there raged a perfect maelstrom. Huge bodies of foam arose high in the air, and were hurled hither and thither, writhing like tortured spirits, while, leaping upon the opposing barrier in rapid succession, wave followed wave, shouting with mad glee, and augmenting the seething mass. At times a monster billow would come swooping along, a perfect liquid avalanche, and, vaulting over the ledge without breaking, dissolve in foam some distance beyond, as if deriding the petty obstacle so fatal to its punier fellows.

This ledge was now looked upon as the great point of danger. If Skipper Jordan could but handle his craft all would be well; but with such a tremendous sea running she was nearly unmanageable. From the course he was steering—and he was hugging the wind as closely as it was possible—he could just escape the threatened danger. It would be a close shave, and the chances were even. So much the maiden learned from the conversation carried on around her, and with feelings wrought to the highest pitch the poor girl awaited the issue of events.

On came the little craft, tossed like an egg shell amidst the boiling surges—so near, that Mary could see her lover firmly grasping the tiller, his eye at times glancing on the ridges of foam churning directly under his lee; so near that her voice could have reached him, were it not for the storm. So near—and to be lost at last! was the despairing thought that almost extorted an agonising cry from her lips.

The Spray had now reached the most dangerous point, and was bearing herself right gallantly. A short distance, and her struggles would be over, her safety secured. But at that moment one of those great billows we have described came heaving in, like some huge monster frothing with rage. All



[THE WATCHERS.]

eyes were fixed upon it as it swept towards the devoted vessel—every breath was held in suspense—the heart almost ceased beating—the senses were bound in thralldom. A moment scarcely elapsed, when the wave was upon her—a moment, when, with both masts by the board, she was borne over the ledge, and was seen reeling and dashed about in the cauldron of foam beyond.

"Save her!—for Heaven's sake, save her!" was the startling cry that aroused the spell-bound spectators on the bluff. It was the warning cry of the old fisherman, and it came not a moment too soon.

Standing on the very brink of the cliff, which fell sheer to the sea, a dizzy depth, swayed in the wind the form of the fisherman's daughter, her arms outstretched towards the engulfed vessel, her eyes glaring maniacally, her face of the hue of death, and distorted with agony, while hoarse, frenzied supplications burst from her lips.

A cautious hand withdrew the frantic girl from her perilous position and led her to her father, who, with the assistance of sympathising neighbours, conveyed the stricken one to her home. Alas! alas! had the cruel, pitiless storm wrought another and more pitiful wreck!

The rain came down now in blinding sheets—the day was drawing to a close, and the bluff was deserted.

The men lately assembled there had hastened to the point where the ledge ran out.

There was just sufficient light to discover the *Spray*, not drifting away to the leeward as they expected, but to their surprise riding head to the sea.

They surmised at once that the anchor had been got in readiness for use, and in the fearful passage over the ledge it had been hurled overboard, and finally brought her up. The sea, they noticed, at times made a complete breach over her, and they could also see that there was not a soul on deck.

Until darkness shut down and prevented further search, the people skirted the coast, if, happily, any survivor should be washed ashore, that they might render assistance. Their errand was fruitless—they expected it would be, for the most sanguine did not cherish a hope of saving any one. They returned to their homes wearied and downcast, and night and sadness brooded over the little fishing hamlet.

A sorrowing and careworn household was the old fisherman's that night, and for many days and nights succeeding. Tossing upon her bed in the unrest of delirium, ever before the horror-stricken girl were pictured the fearful scenes of that dismal afternoon of storm; the shrieking gale—the tumultuous sea—the little bark, almost home—the engulfing waves—the shattered wreck, tossed like a plaything on the mad billows—over and over again in constant repetition—in her waking and in her sleeping hours—these scenes swept before her disordered fancy. Was her mind to be "a wreck at random driven"?

For a long time the scales hung trembling in the balance: for a long time hopes and fears alternately prevailed; but youth and a good constitution finally triumphed.

One day the fisherman's wife sat by her sleeping child, whose slumbers had been less restless and unbroken than usual. The poor woman drew many happy auguries from this unwonted quietness. For a few days back the symptoms of the patient had been more hopeful; gleams of intelligence would be detected in her wild vagaries, as if reason were struggling to resume her sway—to re-unite her broken links.

A deep sigh drew her attention to her daughter, whose eyes at that moment opened. As the mother caught her glance a thrill of joy pervaded her being, and silent thanksgiving arose to Heaven, for in those eyes no longer burned the baleful fires of insanity.

"Oh, mother!" murmured the sick girl, in a weak voice, "I have had such a fearful, terrible dream!"

And an involuntary shudder followed the words. "Let us be thankful, dear child," said the mother, trembling with her new-born joy, "that it was but a dream."

"Yes, thank Heaven! but, oh, it seemed so real! Was it but a dream, mother? Oh, tell me! tell me! Was not the *Spray* lost in that dreadful, dreadful storm?"

"I assure you, my dear daughter, the *Spray* lies safely at anchor in the harbour."

She went to the window and put aside the curtain; then, returning to the bedside, she partially raised her daughter, saying, "Look, Mary, you can see for yourself!" and she pointed to the little craft swinging safely at her moorings.

The young girl remained silent awhile, after being restored to her recumbent position, as if perplexed and pondering. Seeing that she was about to speak, her mother said:

"I would not talk more about it now, dear child. You are weak; talking will injure you. Try to calm your mind—to be composed. Be assured that all is well."

"But, mother, I cannot be calm until I learn more. I see that the *Spray* is safe, but you say nothing of Robert. Tell me truly, mother; I can bear it—what of Robert?" and her eyes were intently fixed on her mother as if she would read her very soul, while a mingled expression of hope and fear rested on her countenance.

"He, too, is safe, Mary—alive and well!"

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the maiden, with a sigh of relief. "If I could but see him," she added, in a low voice, "could but see him, mother, my mind would be at ease."

"Then let it be at ease, dear Mary," said a well-known voice by her side, and a manly form bent down and impressed a kiss upon her pale lips.

It was even so. Robert Jordan, alive and well, flushed with health and happiness, stood in her presence! Ah! how much "better than medicine" was that presence to the prostrate girl!

By a miracle, it almost seemed, the *Spray* and all on board were saved. When the wave struck her and bore her over the ledge, instead of boarding her, in which case every man would have been swept to destruction, it lifted her on its summit, floating her over the jagged rocks. It was in the plunge beyond that the masts went by the board, at the same time the anchor had gone over, and after dragging awhile, took ground. Having only the bare hull of the vessel as a strain upon them, anchor and cable held. How the men saved themselves they could hardly tell. Finding that the vessel did not drag, they managed to get below, for occasionally the sea made a complete breach over her.

The gale spent its fury that night. In the morning the people on shore were astonished to see a signal flying from a jury-mast on board the *Spray*. They could hardly credit their sense of sight, and were in a maze of wonder, until late in the day the sea had so far subsided as to permit a boat to put off to the wreck, when the mystery was solved.

Happiness is a more potent curative than any to be found in the most popular pharmacopoeia. So rapidly did the fisherman's daughter improve under its benign influence, that she was soon enabled to leave her sick-bed, and before many weeks she became the "blushing bride" of the handsome young skipper.

Skipper McIntyre of the *Sally Ann* was present at the wedding, and heartiest in the congratulations to the newly-married couple. The worthy skipper appeared to have something on his mind, and having got the bridegroom, in the course of the evening, "away from the women folks," as he expressed it, he questioned him:

"Why was it, Skipper Jordan, that you altered your course on the morning of the storm? Had you kept on as you were running you would have got in some hours ahead of me."

Skipper Jordan explained that he had discovered a dismantled schooner at the southward, and he ran down to see if he could render any assistance, but he found that she was a deserted wreck.

"'Twas a noble act in you, I must say, skipper, in such weather," said the old man with honest enthusiasm, "and Heaven has rewarded you for it! It was a narrow squeak, though, that you had. I don't believe the *Sally Ann* would have stood that leap over the ledge like that craft of your'n."

"It is a common thing," rejoined the young skipper, jocosely, "for the *Spray* to fly over the ledge. I suppose now, Skipper McIntyre, you will permit me to say of her as you said of the *Sally Ann* before we left the cove—'Handsome is that handsome does!'"

"Yes, by Jove, you may!" responded the old seadog, "and that fine feathers sometimes cover fine birds!"

C. P. J



[THE ARTFUL DODGER.]

STRANGELY MARRIED.

BY ERNEST BRENT,

Author of "Strayed Away," "Milly Lee," "John Kendrake's Destiny," &c.

CHAPTER XXII.

My whole heart is molten with thy tears,
And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love
Compels with grief mine eyes and labouring breath;
For what thou art I know thee. *Scinburne.*

LOOKING back into that long time gone by when he used to go to Glen Farm, Fred found that May had always held a pleasant place in his memory. When he had gone and May was absent Fred remembered that he had felt disappointed.

That sense of something wanting when a certain face is absent is one of the surest signs of love. It is in the time of trial that we know whose sympathy gives us most comfort, whose affection we most treasure. Fred could not have met any one whom he would have been so glad to see as he was to see May Lenmore.

"And now if I tell her the truth what will she say?" thought Fred. "Shrink from me in fear, or cling to me the nearer, as I have heard some girls will when the man they love is in danger?"

"Why was I cruel, little one?" he asked, with a tenderness new and strange to him. "Because I did not reveal myself to you at first?"

"Why didn't you?"

"I wanted to see whether I was forgotten, whether my friends had come to drive the old ones out of our memory."

May shook her head.

"We have no new friends, Fred. Will you come some? You were coming, were you not? They will be so glad to see you."

Mr. Amory drew a deep breath.

"May," he said, in a solemn, gentle tone, "I am going away after to-night. I came here hoping to see some one that I knew in the dear old place, and would rather have seen you than any one else in the world—but you must not say that you have seen me."

"Why, Fred?"

"Have I changed much? Look at me closely." She did look at him, her sweet eyes going in under the deep care-lines on the browned face that she had known when it was so boyish and so happy.

"Yes, you have changed," she said, lowly and

softly. "You look older than I thought you would, and I think you have seen trouble."

"I have seen trouble," he said, quietly, "and I am in danger, May. I am in the power of a man who would show me no mercy if he were to find me here after to-morrow. I dare not go home yet. I dared not come to Glen Farm, much as I wished to see you—you of all the rest, May, for I love you, though I did not know how well till that moment when we met."

He had drawn the girl's face to his shoulder and her eyes looked up at him—very sweet, and shy, and tremulous their glance. It had been her dream that some day he would come back and tell her that he loved her.

"Will you come home with me?" she asked.

"I had better not, May. If it were known that I had been seen here I should be in danger."

"But you would like to see John?"

"Very much; only he is keen and close, would question my motive, and perhaps doubt me. I cannot see him yet."

"See William, then—and Mildred. She has often talked of you."

"How can I see them? I dare not go home."

"Let me bring them here, then; or we can come to the oak triangle, you know, just under the hill on the other side of the Glen."

"Yes, I know; it would be hard if I could forget that favourite haunt of ours."

"Will you be there to-morrow evening? We can trust Mildred to say nothing, I am sure; and as for honest old Will—you know him."

"Good old Will!" said Fred, with a kindly recollection of John Lenmore's brother. "I suppose he is just the same honest, brave, and simple-hearted fellow?"

"Just the same."

"You remember how we used to banter him about never having been in love? Is he the same in that respect too?"

"He is very fond of Mildred," smiled May, "and he does not think we see how fond he is. We don't tease him—he takes it to heart so."

"Fond of Mildred?" repeated Fred, smiling too, in spite of his trouble. "What a strange choice for big, stolid Will to make. She is such a perfect little lady, and Will—"

"Will is slow and shy," said May, gently; "but he is a gentleman, and more intelligent than we think him."

"But Mildred, with her brilliant intellect and high, refined instinct—she could never care for him."

"That we do not know," was the quiet answer. "A woman could be very happy with such love as William Lenmore's. He has truth and strength in his nature; Mildred could confide in him."

"Yes; but you remember Tennyson—as the husband so the wife is."

"I know," said May; "but that is only part of a truth. A woman would never have written those lines; and Will, though country-bred, is not a clown. Men like him make better husbands than men of genius. Genius can be very cruel; it expects too much of us. John Lenmore says so."

"What does Mildred think? Does she know—"

"I think so."

"And how does she treat him?"

"Very kindly."

"That is good of her," said Fred; "she has an admirable nature. I am glad that she is kind to poor old Will. A woman is never so unlovely, never does herself so much injustice, as when she laughs at a pure affection because she cannot return it."

If May had been disturbed by a lingering fear that Fred and Mildred had ever cared for each other it quite went now. Had Fred loved her he could not have been glad to hear that she was kind to Will.

"And how has it been with you?" he asked.

"How is it, May, that in all the long time I have been away, you have not lost your heart?"

"Perhaps there was no one to win it," said May, with a touch of her old gaiety. "I have had no serious offers, except one."

"Who is the one?"

"Mr. Carlow. And do you know, Fred, father seems to wish me to marry him. It is so strange to me. Father used to treat him in such a proud way, but that is changed now."

"Why, the man is more than twice your age!" said Fred, indignantly; "and his very name is a reproach. There must be something in it that we cannot see."

"I am afraid father has been borrowing money of him."

"And you are to be sacrificed for his folly! No, May, I love you too well to let that be. Promise that you will be true to yourself and to me."

"Need I promise?"

Her tone of voice and the sweet look that accompanied her words were a better promise than any vow.

"No, my darling," he said, with a caress. "And now let us think of to-morrow. Remember, it will be my last day in England for the present, so be sure and come."

"Shall I bring Will and Mildred?"
 "Yes, both—but no others. I could not bear to see Lizzie."

May thought that strange, but did not ask him why.

"Yes," he said, musingly; "it will be my last day in England for a long time; but I hope to come back with a good name and prove my innocence."

"Of what, Fred?"

"A very terrible crime, May; and if you ever hear of it, if they ever tell you I am guilty, bear in mind that as surely as we stand here together, under the stars that shine over dear old Thorpendean, I am quite innocent. Will you believe me?"

"I do, Fred; from my soul I do."

"Heaven bless you!" he said, simply. "Such faith as yours will help me to find the way of redemption. Good-night, darling. I have not been a good man, but I have tried, and I will be yet."

Then a long and silent close embrace, and he left her. May heard his receding footsteps, and saw him disappear dimly through her tears.

CHAPTER XXIII:

*Who shall unravel the entangled chain
 That winds about its victim, like the snake
 About the Laocoon, till in the end
 It crushes out innocence—honour—life?
 He stood within this peril.* *Manner.*

On the night when Mr. Harperley had his interview with Paul Dalrymple, and left him with such satisfactory results, Mr. Harperley strolled about Thorpendean in a pleased and meditative frame of mind. He had not an unsatisfactory point to dwell upon. The path before him, as far as he could see, led to an endless and a golden harvest.

"When a man's down-east and colonial," he reflected, "he's likely to be enterprising, he is. It ain't every man who would come thousands of miles for a holiday on spec and make it pay; but I'm gifted that way, I am. Nathaniel Harperley knows tochre, he does—some."

The gentleman who knew tochre strolled into the village, and went, by the force of habit, into the dingiest tavern he could find. He rewarded the self-denial he had exercised at The Croft by ordering a liberal glass of brandy and water; in fact, not being satisfied with the one tendered him, he ordered a bottle of the spirit, a pint tumbler, and a big jug of boiling water.

"We don't use thimbles our way," he said, with a friendly nod to the landlord, who was favourably impressed by the sight of a handful of sovereigns. "We drink, we do, when we do drink. Nothing done in the miniature way down there. Take a drink, boss?"

The landlord took a drink for civility's sake, and wondered what kind of man it was who drank half a pint of brandy at a time and survived.

"Been a great traveller, sir?" he ventured.

"Some."

"Seen America, perhaps?"

"Seen America! Tell you what, stranger; if you went all over this 'ere civilised globe twice, you wouldn't see America. It's a big place, that is; and long after you've gone to smash they'll find a dozen or two worlds a trifle bigger than the one Columbus found down our way. America's the root of the earth, that's what it is; and this little land of yours is just a bit that got chipped off and floated over the Atlantic. That's the truth. You bet on it."

The landlord, not having a speculative turn of mind, tacitly declined to stake.

"I'm a down-easter, I am," said Mr. Harperley, who never lost an opportunity of giving that interesting piece of information—"I'm colonial, too; and perhaps I mean to finish by being a Britisher."

The landlord assured him he could not do better.

"This 'ere's a pretty place," said Mr. Harperley, mixing himself a second glass—the first had not made the slightest impression upon him—"only your town ain't much bigger than our corn stacks. We do things on a big scale, we do."

"I never went so far as the eastern States," said a quiet gentleman, who stood drinking a little weak sherry and water by the tall American's elbow; "but I went to New York once, and what I saw there impressed me."

"Guess it would, stranger. Most Britishers air astonished considerably."

"I was, very much indeed. You have been to the colonies—what do you think of them?"

"Tochre," said Mr. Harperley, condescendingly. "The States would do better with them. If you hadn't a few of us to send you ahead, they wouldn't be much. Take a drink?"

"Thank you, I have some wine and water."

"Wash! this is the stuff to open your eyes; 'tain't like the old rye we get down-east, but it's good as a substitute. Just you drink with me. I am a stranger to these parts and I like to be sociable."

"There's a private room gentlemen," suggested the landlord, "and if you are going to stay for a night or two, I can accommodate you."

"Wal, yes, perhaps I may," said Mr. Harperley. "What do you say, stranger, to a game at euchre; it's a go-ahead kind of recreation euchre is."

The stranger expressed his willingness to be initiated into its mysteries and, the landlord produced a well-worn pack of cards that had done duty over many a game of cribbage played by the mildly dissipated natives of the village.

"Play for anything?" said Mr. Harperley.

"Just as you please. I have no skill in the game; and never care to win or lose money, but I do not mind a shilling or so."

"Out in California," said Mr. Harperley, "I've seen a dozen of us playing for nuggets of gold as big as my thumb, every one with a pocketful of them and a bowie in front of him, to keep the play square."

"You have travelled a great deal," observed the other—"the Cape, America, California, and now England. Have you friends here?"

"Some. There's a big swell lives here at The Croft, and we are like brothers, we are. Met him out at Pentolina. Perhaps you know him?"

"No. I am quite a stranger here."

"Down on business?"

The stranger smiled a negative.

"No," he said; "my employers, Bates and Marston, the drapers, of Wood-street, you know, they said to me, 'Falcon, you have worked hard lately, and a little holiday will do you good. Take a fortnight and recruit your strength, as we may have to send you to New York.' So they gave me a twenty pound note, and here I am."

Mr. Harperley nodded. He had plenty of money, but he could not resist the desire to possess himself of the twenty pounds spoken of by his quiet and communicative companion. The thoroughbred gambler does not mind what amount he plays for so that he wins.

But Mr. Falcon, of Bates and Marston, the drapers, had singular fortune, and played with great care for a man who had never played before. He was most agreeable society, too, and was full of information. His anecdotes, chiefly of adventures that had occurred to fellow commercial travellers, kept Mr. Harperley in a roar of laughter.

"I guess now I'd like your company for a week or so, if you are going to stay," said the down-east gentleman, with an air of patronage. "My friend, Paul Dalrymple, Esq., won't hear of my going away just yet."

"You stay at the house?"

"No, not for me. Being a free and easy colonial, I can't quite stand them fellows in plush standing behind your chair, and seeing how much dinner you eat. A man must be bred and born to it to enjoy himself under those exhilarating difficulties."

"I have heard Mr. Dalrymple spoken very highly of," said Mr. Falcon, as he dealt the cards. "They say he is very rich."

"Do they?"

"I find he has not been home long, by all report."

"Not very."

"Did he make all his money abroad?"

"Most of it," said Harperley, on whom the drink and the close atmosphere were beginning to tell; he was in a stolid state of semi-intoxicated wisdom, and meant to guard his secret with profound care.

"Then he must have been fortunate," said Falcon.

"For my part, I should not care to run the risk of such a long voyage. I find my Scotch and Irish journeys quite enough for me."

Mr. Harperley expressed an opinion that Scotch and Irish journeys were walks for a schoolboy, except for the bits of sea, which he said he would paddle in a ten-foot canoe. He wanted to lay a wager to that effect, but his listener was afraid to risk any money.

"Just you bet," said Mr. Harperley, solemnly.

"Some men are gifted in the way of making fortunes. Some does it in six months, some in six years. Some by one big stroke; and that's how Paul Dalrymple, Esquire, made his,—a big stroke, stranger,—tochre right up; and I am going in for shares."

"I suppose, then, that he benefited by your larger experience, and had some luck?"

"There, you've said it, stranger, you have," said the down-easter, sleepily. "Yes, that's it; I'm a bit tired now, so we'll throw over. I ain't slept much for a week or more."

There was a small, uncomfortable sofa, with a torn and shabby covering, in the sitting room, and on this Mr. Harperley stretched himself without further ceremony, putting a chair at the end to accommodate his great length. Falcon took up a paper and began to read. Harperley watched him with leaden eyes, and then slept, breathing heavily and regularly.

Falcon went on reading, glancing now and then at

the sleeping man, whose hand was in his left hand breast pocket, clutching something that he guarded carefully, in spite of slumber; presently Falcon walked twice across the room. There was no change in the sleeper's breathing, the huge chest heaved and fell with unvarying regularity.

The detective took a worn-out quill pen from a black japanned inkstand, and seating himself between the table and the couch, with the newspaper still before him, tickled Harperley's hand with the feather end. He groaned uneasily, and his hand slid away. In a moment, with the dexterity of a trained plunderer, Falcon had the contents of his pocket out.

They were a large coarse handkerchief, half silk, half cotton, some pieces of newspapers, and a damaged, discoloured pocket-book, filled with letters stained by water. The letters numbered thirteen and were alike in character; advices from Mr. Edward Dacre to Richard Bryant, to pay Frederick Amory sums of money, varying in amount from one to five thousand pounds.

Out of the thirteen, Falcon selected five, put them carefully away, then replaced the book. He tried the other pockets, and found a dangerous knife, with an eight inch blade, double-edged, and curved at the point; and there was a revolver with six chambers loaded and capped.

"My friend would be a nice customer to meet after a pint of brandy," smiled Mr. Falcon. "I shall be doing him a favour if I lessen his power of mischief."

The knife he put back, the revolver he took to pieces, and soaked the body of the weapon, with the charges and caps complete, in one of the long tumblers. He let it remain there five minutes, and pursued his investigations. They resulted in the discovery of the cheque drawn by Paul Dalrymple and made payable to Nathaniel Harperley, Esquire.

"Yes, I am on the right trail," reflected Falcon, with professional pride. "Paul Dalrymple is the chief criminal, this man his accomplice; with the finding of Mr. Frederick Amory the chain would be complete."

He took the number of the cheque and the amount it was for, and then replaced it as he had done the other things. There was no hurry in his movements. He was as calm as if engaged in the most ordinary occupation. He satisfied himself that the caps and charges of the revolver were entirely useless, then put the weapon together and restored it to its owner's pocket. He washed the tumbler and mixed himself some brandy and water in it—not much, for Mr. Falcon's work was of a nature that required a head always clear, and a hand that never trembled.

When Mr. Harperley woke, nearly an hour later, his quiet little friend, who travelled for the great drapers, was indulging in a harmless game at cribbage—himself against dummy, and had just, with commendable equity, scored dummy two for his heels.

"Lively game that air," said Mr. Harperley, collecting his senses slowly. "Should say now you was easily pleased, stranger."

"We learn these things in our line," said Mr. Falcon. "You see, we are frequently thrown upon our own resources for amusement, and I can assure you I have played dummy crib or beggar my neighbour for hours together sometimes. Will you play?"

"Guess I'll see my friend, Dalrymple," replied Harperley. "It will be somewhere about his dinner-time, and you Britishers do know how to feed. But I don't have no mutes hanging round my chair. I'll give him a friendly hint to send them out."

"I may have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"Likely. Perhaps I'll stay here for a few nights."

"And as there is no reason why I should not, you may give me a few more lessons in euchre. I find the early hours rather irksome here."

"That's just my complaint, stranger; so we'll have some extra candles and start a game when I come back."

He went out to the bar and flung down a sovereign.

"I am going to stay, I am," he said to the landlord; "so just you keep that, and put a bottle of brandy and some cigars in my sleeping-room—you do. I want to liquor up when I like; and when that money's gone just you ask for some more—that's my way, you see."

His cumbersome form passed through the low doorway, and he walked up the quiet lanes on his way to The Croft. He had taken it into his huge uncouth head that he should like to see Mrs. Dalrymple again.

The man's cogitations assumed a curious shape as he walked on. In the course of his rough life, with its rougher views, he had thought little of tenderness or beauty, but the splendour of Paul's mother had impressed him powerfully.

When he reached The Croft and was admitted by

the servant, he walked straight into the room where his interview with Paul had taken place. Mrs. Dalrymple was sitting there in deep thought. Harperley made what he intended to be a polite and sweeping bow. It was received with a slight shudder of disgust, but the next moment some hidden motive made her meet him with a smile.

"Ah, Mr. Harperley," she said, "my son spoke of you just before he went out. Did not the servants tell you he was not at home?"

"Didn't ask them, madam," said Harperley, with an attempt to be at his ease. "Took the privilege of an old friend and walked straight in. It's our way down-east, madam. And Paul is out?"

"Yes; I think he has ridden over to Mr. Dacre, at the Lodge."

Mr. Harperley nodded, as though the information had given him food for reflection. He sat looking at Mrs. Dalrymple with one huge hand dimming the polished surface of the table, and a gaze in his semi-drunken eyes that sickened the lady's delicacy of instinct.

Mrs. Dalrymple wore a purple velvet robe, quite plain, and its heavy folds outlined her magnificent figure like drapery; it left the beautiful arms and faultless shoulders bare.

"You're a handsome woman, you air," said Harperley, after a long pause. "I've travelled some, I have, and seen a few—but you're the best of all creation yet."

"Mr. Harperley!"

"Now just don't you get in a passion," he said, rising as she rose; "I'm a rough down-easter, and I mean what I say. The first time I saw you I was struck all of a heap—right over—and to-night I was thinking, if ever there was a lady who would suit Nathaniel, it's you."

The proud breast rose with a sense of suffocation, so deep was her anger. She moved towards the bell.

"At any risk," she muttered, "this is not to be endured."

"Don't you ring that bell," said Harperley, in a deliberate tone of warning; "and just you think twice before you say 'no' to me. You don't find many of my build in these parts, I guess; and I'm rich, I am."

Relinquishing her intention of ringing the bell, Mrs. Dalrymple moved towards the door.

Harperley caught her by the wrist; her open scorn raised his savage temper.

"See here, madam," he said, bringing out the old pocket-book. "Just you change this for a certificate of marriage between you and me; or, I tell you, I can send Paul Dalrymple, Esquire, to Newgate, I can."

As she stood there, words as the door opened, and Paul entered. He was very pale; there was a strange look in his eyes; but he smiled at Mr. Harperley.

"Ah, my friend," he said, cordially, "you here? Have I kept dinner waiting, mother?"

"No, Paul; it is not quite ready yet."

"Then Mr. Harperley and I have time for a stroll?"

"If you will not be long."

"Half-an-hour."

"Not longer; or say an hour at most."

"An hour at most," repeated Paul. "Yes; that will do. One minute, Harperley."

He bounded up the staircase to his dressing-room, and opened a case, from which he took a pair of pistols—so small that he might have carried them in his waistcoat pockets. He loaded them with a little cartridge in each, capped them, and put them in his waistband. Scarcely two minutes had elapsed before he was downstairs again.

"Come, my friend," he said, touching Harperley kindly on the shoulder. "A stroll as far as the oak triangle will give us an appetite for dinner."

And the two men went together, arm-in-arm, while Mrs. Dalrymple watched them from the window, and wondered if her son had heard Mr. Harperley's last words.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mine enemy hath found me; this fatal blow Comes from no hand but his. Old Play.

PAUL had never been so thoroughly genial to his colonial friend before; his whole manner was that of a man who had some unusual cause for gaiety, and yet in his gayest tones, in his most cordial gesture was something suppressed and strange, that might have warned the man had he been on his guard.

"I am not sorry that you came this evening," observed Paul, retaining his friendly pressure on the other's arm. "Had you been there long when I came in?"

"Not more than a few minutes. I thought you might find a knife and fork for me at dinner. I've heard that your English dinners are to be, and I'd like to see one."

"You shall with pleasure, though I think it will scarcely suit your free and easy style; and my mother is rather particular in matters of etiquette. Still, she will put down any little eccentricities to your colonial training—or want of training."

"I can do the gentleman though," said Mr. Harperley, modestly, "just according to the company I'm in. It's a gift of mine, that air."

By this time they had reached the oak triangle, so called because of three huge trees, whose branches had so intertwined as to form a dark, impenetrable roof of foliage, and whose outer growth cast a heavy shadow on the ground.

"You are gifted in several ways," said Paul.

"What a quiet place this is, is it not?"

"Yes, it air."

"At night," said Paul, as if the subject moved him and made music in his voice, "you can lie here on the long grass, making a pillow of an old mossy root, and listen to the nightingale, till in the silence and the solitude your very soul thrills. Have you ever felt so?"

"Ya-as," drawled Harperley. "I have felt poetryfied now and agin, but I think I took about a pint of brandy more or less this afternoon, and my nerves are a bit shaky."

"I thought so. Try a cigar to compose them."

"Don't mind if I do."

Paul threw himself upon the sward and began to smoke, after having tendered the other his cigar-case and fuses. There was silence for quite five minutes. Paul's manner had grown strange; Harperley was not in his usual nerve, and did not know how to begin a conversation.

"Mr. Harperley," said Paul, taking the cigar from his lips to admire the long white ash, "can you remember in your many varied days of adventure when your life was most in danger?"

"Wal, I've had a narrow squeak for it many a time; but I think about the highest was over a b'ar."

"A b'ar! Ah, when you kept a shanty!"

"No; I mean a b'ar—a live b'ar; one of the biggest I ever saw. If you like I'll just tell you how it were."

"Do."

"Wal, you see, when I was down-east b'ars was plentiful, and in winter time when they gets hungry they gets daring. They'll carry off an ox, or best part on him; and there was one in our location got so to know us that I believe he used to watch the men away and then walk into the settlement and pick out any one he liked—woman or child—children mostly."

"He stood as high as a helter, or my name ain't Nathaniel Harperley; and if he'd one bullet in his hide he'd twenty; but they never hurt him a bit. We used to say he shook 'em out, or didn't mind 'em in—but there they were. Wal, last of all, when he'd tired out most and frightened the rest, I heerd on him, and I laid a bet of five hundred pounds that I'd settle him single-handed, just with a six-shooter and a bowie—once twice as big as this here, it were—the blade weighed nigh a pound and measured over a foot—it took me through many a big fight, that bowie did."

"It is common to carry such weapons in the States?"

"Yes; we go in for settling up when we begin."

"It would not, of course, strike you that the practice is a cowardly and a brutal one?"

"Just you go out there and preach that air doctrine," suggested Mr. Harperley, "and see if you can make a conversion. There was one Britisher as tried it on with me; that's why I turned colonial."

"He could not make a convert of you?"

"He might if he'd argued long enough," said Harperley, drily; "but he fell down, with a hole in the back of his coat, and forgot what he was going to say."

"In point of fact, you murdered the man."

"Wal, I didn't like to have a good weapon abused, and that's a fact; but this don't get on with the b'ar story. I was just saying that I got the bet taken, and one evening when mister b'ar come to see us, I took tracks after him, I did. I knew his foot. I followed him ten hours nigh to a minute."

"Did you?" said Paul, with gratifying interest.

"I did. I knew he couldn't be more than half a mile ahead, and I thought I'd have a sleep, and I did; and when I woke what do you think was happening?"

Mr. Dalrymple expressed his inability to conjecture.

"Wal, just this here. Mister b'ar was laying down alongside of me, just as if he was a big kitten, tapping me with his paw, and rolling me over in the snow, he were. It's a fact."

"He had an affection for you, perhaps," said Paul, lazily, "or he mistook you for one of his own kind. Did you appreciate his ursine playfulness?"

"I was just a bit skeered. There's a sort of human sense about b'ars in one thing. When a b'ar thinks he's got you all to himself, and you can't get out of it, he'll play with you as long as he likes; just showing his teeth now and then, or digging his claws in, to let you know what he means. This b'ar did so with me."

"It could not have been the most pleasant moment of your existence," said Paul, "to be awakened out of sleep and find a big bear playing with you."

"Wal, I laid quiet, you see, so as not to make the varmint wild, and little by little I gets my bowie out, and opens it. I felt kinder better then—easier in my mind."

"I had my six-shooter in my pocket," he went on, as Paul signified by a gesture that he was listening with lazy interest; "and I put my hand in for it, but mister b'ar objected to that. When he saw my hand move he smelt it, curious like, so I thought I'd give him something to sniff at. I took aim as well as I could, through the lining, and let fly—hit him just fair between the eyes; but the ball slanted, and there he was. You never saw a b'ar so completely astonished."

"I can picture the situation."

"Larf—didn't I larf, to see him rub his poor race with one paw then t'other, growling all the while, and feeling about for me now and then; and he found me, too. I'd just time to hold the knife slick, so, in front of me, when he put the hug on, and just as the breath was going out of me, down he dropped—he'd committed suicide on my bowie—fact."

"And so you won the bet?"

"Yes; and spent the money."

"A natural sequence. Was that your last b'ar fight?"

"It were."

"And the most dangerous moment of your life?"

"Yes; I've had some nigh as bad, but none that quite came up to it."

"Well?" said Paul, slowly and quietly. "When that bear had you entirely at his mercy you were not in such jeopardy as you are now with me in this sweet solitude under the stars."

Harperley stared at him in surprise, and then looked round involuntarily to see from which quarter he might expect danger. There was not a soul near, save Paul, who lay on the grass sending up wreaths of smoke, with graceful indolence—he was quite alone.

"How's that?" he said, "puzzled to find a meaning. There's to be in you, but I don't quite make you out."

"Possibly. The proper study of my character requires more penetration than you possess, gifted as you are."

"Guess now I'd better be on the look-out," said Harperley to himself. "There's a gleam of mischief in his eye, and he didn't bring me here for nothing. I thought he was a mighty deal too friendly."

"You see," said Paul, with the same slow politeness, "I like to enjoy my existence, to make for each separate hour a separate pleasure, and have nothing in the background to mar that pleasure."

"Wal."

"You are in possession of a secret that gives you a certain power over me. If it were only over me I should not mind so much; but it gave you the licence to come in a semi-drunken state to my house and insult one for whose happiness a dozen such lives as yours would be as nothing."

The utter absence of all passion, the measured, distinct words had a singular effect on the gentleman whose pride it was that he came from down-east, and was, in part, colonial. Paul gave no indication that he intended violence. He still lay at his graceful length and enjoyed his cigar.

"Ah!" said Mr. Harperley, "so you heard us?"

"Every word."

Harperley rubbed his shaggy head.

"It weren't to be, he admitted. "I took too much brandy. You may tell her so; if you like, I'll apologise before dinner."

"Thanks. Permit me, in my mother's name, to decline. What I want to say is this: I can have no pleasure if, while you live, I am in your power. I cannot have it so that any time you choose to get intoxicated, you can come to my house, insult my mother, like the ill-bred brute you are, and frighten her with threats of what you can do with me!"

"How will you take the change out?" Mr. Harperley inquired, sitting up with an ugly grin. "You are talking mighty tall, Paul Dalrymple, Esquire; but how will you do it?"

"To that point we shall come presently," said Dalrymple, quite unmoved. "You must see that such a state of things cannot exist. Now the whole secret of your power over me lies in the fact that you possess a pocket-book taken from the body of Mr. Bryant. If that were mine, all the rest of your story would be worth nothing to you. Now I will

give you a fixed and certain sum for it, and after that if you ever come to my door, as many as may be required of my grooms shall horsewhip you out of the grounds. Name your price, and let me have the book."

"Wal," said Mr. Harperley, with a long breath of surprise, "I never thought I'd come all the way from Pantalina to hear that 'ere from you!"

"That you have the book about you, I am certain," Paul went on, "and it must be mine. I will give you five hundred pounds for it."

"It's worth that yearly," sneered Harperley. "You are right in one thing, though. I have it about me, in this here pocket, along with this new bowie, and if you try to get the one, you will most likely get t'other."

"I must risk it," said Paul, rising quietly; "but I tell you, Harperley, you had better give it up. You are an old man, and your nerves, I can see, are unstrung to-day. Your strength would not last ten minutes in a struggle. I, when I begin, have the power of a tiger, and if I leave you here for dead, the fault will be entirely your own."

In the way in which Paul stood up, there was a slow gathering together of strength and determination that made Harperley hesitate in spite of the knife he had drawn. He could not deny the fact to himself that Dalrymple's conduct had unnerved him. He saw now that the purpose of that stroll before dinner was to take away the secret of his power or leave him dead.

"If the worst comes," said Paul, with the same intensity of purpose in his voice, "remember that no suspicion will attach itself to me. You will be found here with plenty of money in your pockets and a cheque from me. I shall say that you are a man with whom I had dealings in the colonies, and that the cheque is the balance of a debt. You had better give me the book."

"Nat Harperley's too old a hoss to be taken so," was the reply. "It wouldn't pay to settle you, but if you come too nigh you'll want a quiet room and a doctor for a few weeks. We'd better not fall out, Paul Dalrymple, Esquire."

"The book!"

"No."

Paul took a step forward, as if to leap on Harperley, who waited for him with the dangerous blade, but when within two yards of the man, Paul drew out his small pistols and fired the contents of one into his chest. Harperley reeled back, and leaned against a tree.

"Now," said Paul, with savage resolution in his white and handsome face, "you are wounded, but not dangerously. You see I have a second weapon, and if I have to use it you will die. The book!"

"No."

And Harperley drew out his revolver; he pulled the trigger twice, but nothing followed except the dull click of the hammer on a useless cap. He threw it down with an oath, and wounded as he was, rushed at Paul.

"Your own fault," Dalrymple said, as he deliberately fired the second weapon. "I gave you every chance."

This time Harperley fell. He writhed for a few moments in agony, then turned over on his back, and lay with his broad chest heaving.

"Tochre!" he panted. "Paul Dalrymple, Esquire, you've done it—you have—all the way from Pantalina—for this."

He made a faint attempt to hurl the knife at his slayer, but the arm fell heavily to his side. He muttered something, in which the name of Bryant occurred. The next moment he was dead.

Paul took the pocket-book with a steady hand, and putting it away, picked up the revolver, curious to see why it did not go off. As he lifted the hammer a heavy grip fell on his shoulder, and he was confronted by Frederick Amory.

"You have murdered him," said Fred, pointing sternly to the fallen body. "I saw it done."

A swift and heavy blow on the temple stretched him senseless by Harperley's side. As they lay there together, an idea suggested itself to Dalrymple. He put Fred's hand in Harperley's right, the one that still held the bowie, and dropped Harperley's revolver as though Fred had let it fall.

"That will do," Dalrymple said, "and those who find them may put their own construction on what they see. Certainly, they look as if they had been engaged in a deadly struggle."

Paul lighted a second cigar, and went home. In answer to his mother's inquiry, he said simply that his eccentric colonial friend had changed his mind about dining with them.

(To be continued.)

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS BANKS.—The total amount received from depositors in the Post-office savings banks to the close of the year 1869, together with

the interest due thereon, was 33,238,181; the total amount repaid to depositors was 19,713,972, leaving due to depositors on the 31st of December, 1869, 13,524,209. The deposits were 10,769,297 in number; the withdrawals, 3,462,309. It was originally estimated that the average cost of each transaction would be 7d. The total cost of these banks to the 31st of December, 1869, has been 398,163; on the total transactions, 14,231,606, this shows an average cost of 6-7-10. The number of accounts open at the end of the year 1869 was 1,085,785. Valuing the securities at cost price, less depreciation of terminable annuities, the assets show a surplus of 225,723.

BARRISTERS IGNORANT OF THE LAW.—Whether barristers do or do not obtain practice in spite of positive ignorance of law, is a question of very great importance connected with the future of legal education. If this question is answered in the negative, the public would not have much to complain of, although the profession might still feel aggrieved. Unfortunately, we believe that each man possessing legal knowledge at the bar can add his testimony to that of Sir Roundell Palmer, who said recently in the House of Commons, that if called upon to give evidence on oath respecting the attainments of some "learned" friends of his in no inconsiderable practice, he should feel some difficulty in saying that they knew any law whatever. Therefore, we have the fact established on the best authority, that barristers do obtain business, who are grossly ignorant of the principles of the science which they profess.

THE OPENING OF THE THAMES EMBANKMENT

The Prince of Wales, accompanied by her Royal Highness Princess Louise, performed the ceremony of opening the Thames Embankment on behalf of Her Majesty on July 13.

The embankment was commenced in February, 1864; and the river-side footway between Westminster-bridge and the Temple was opened to the public two years ago. At that time the completion of the carriage way was prevented by the unfinished state of the Metropolitan District Railway between Westminster and Blackfriars, and this obstacle was not removed until the 30th of May last. Within six weeks from the opening of the railway the carriage way of the embankment was formed and the northern footway paved.

Until Monday it was generally expected that Her Majesty would herself take part in the opening ceremonial, and great preparations were made to do honour to the occasion. Tiers of covered seats were erected on both sides of the way, from a point near Westminster to the Charing-cross railway-bridge, and again on the north side for some distance beyond the Charing-cross station. Altogether, about three miles of seats were provided, affording accommodation for 10,000 persons, and these seats, especially those of the principal pavilion, were gallily decorated with flags and crimson cloth.

The line of the roadway was kept on both sides by the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards and the Coldstream Guards, supported by a strong body of police. The footway, except where occupied by seats, was left open to the public. The principal pavilion was on the north side, to the west of the Charing-cross railway-bridge, and was chiefly occupied by ladies in brilliant toilettes and carrying bouquets still more brilliant. The massive pillars supporting the railway bridge were partly screened by a well-contrived temporary bank of evergreens, and flowers and flags were displayed at the Metropolitan Railway stations, the Temple Gardens, and other places flanking the line of the embankment.

Punctually at 12 o'clock the royal cortège arrived at the entrance to the embankment from Bridge-street, Westminster. The carriages of the chairman and members of the Board of Works were already formed in line within the barrier, ready to head the procession; and they at once moved forward at a foot's pace. They were followed by four of the Royal State carriages, each drawn by two horses, conveying the Officers of the Household in Waiting; then by a captain's escort of the Blues, and then by a fifth State carriage and pair, conveying their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Princess Louise, and the Master of the Horse, the Marquis of Ailesbury. The State portion of the procession was itself not particularly imposing, but the shabbiness and the ill-assorted carriages of the members of the Board of Works introduced an element of the grotesque which rendered the whole almost ridiculous.

The Right Hon. Henry Austin Bruce, Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, was in attendance at this spot.

The Royal procession, preceded by the carriages of the members of the Board, passed along the embankment as far as Blackfriars-bridge, and then re-

turned to Westminster-bridge, when his Royal Highness declared the embankment to be open, and a royal salute was fired to announce the event.

The route of the procession, on returning to Marlborough-house, was the same as on arriving.

The gentlemen who took part in the ceremony wore levee dress, the ladies morning dress.

The line of the embankment was kept by the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards and the Coldstream Guards, and a Guard of Honour was stationed at the pavilion, near Hungerford-bridge.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

In the year 1869 there were 460,635 persons admitted to view the general collections of the British Museum. This number, although a little less than that of 1868, exceeds that of any other year since the last Exhibition year. The number of visits to the reading-room for study or research in 1869 increased to 103,884, averaging 356 a day; and each reader appears to have consulted, on an average, 13 volumes per diem. In 1869 32,013 volumes and pamphlets were added to the library in the year. 26,331 parts of volumes, or separate numbers of periodical publications or works in progress; 1,181 sets of newspapers, 2,582 pieces of music, and 5,738 other articles. Among the additions to the library are a volume of "Lord Mayor's Pageants and Poems," printed in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.; some remarkable Mexican books, formerly belonging to the Emperor Maximilian or his secretary, and upwards of 1,100 volumes of Chinese classical works. Among the acquisitions in the map department is a photograph of the superb "Mappe-Monde," made at Venice in 1457-59, at the instance of Prince Henry the Navigator, and at the expense of his uncle, King Alfonso V., by Fra Mauro, of the Camaldolese Convent of San Michele di Murano, and on account of which a medal was struck in his honour by the Republic, describing him as "Cosmographus incomparabilis."

In the department of manuscripts the acquisitions have been numerous and valuable; among them is the French theological work, entitled *Somme le Roy*, composed by Friar Laurent, Confessor to Philip III. of France, in the year 1279, with illustrative miniatures on nine leaves, painted by a French artist about the year 1300. Two collections of Japanese manuscripts have been obtained; one consists of 11 works relating to the history, constitution, and laws of Japan, and the other comprises 131 volumes of a wider range, containing, besides specimens of various branches of Japanese literature, numerous drawings illustrative of the manners, industry, arts, and natural history of Japan. In the department of oriental antiquities there have been two donations from the Prince of Wales in the past year. One is the outer and inner coffin and mummy of Shepshet, a female, the coffins elaborately painted with scenes and hieroglyphics representing the goddess Nu, judgment of the dead, visit of the soul to the body, &c., found in a tomb near the Colossi of the Plains of Gournah, of the period of the 26th dynasty, about B.C. 650. The other, found in the same tomb, but of an earlier period, is the coffin and mummy of a female named Bakraus or Bocchoris, with similar scenes painted in bright colours.

In the department of British and Mediæval antiquities and ethnography several objects have been received from Easter Island, in the South Pacific, removed thence by officers of Her Majesty's ship *Topaze*; one is a colossal stone figure, presented to the museum by Her Majesty. There has also been received an executioner's axe and a sword from Dahomey, and other African weapons; a musical instrument given by the daughter of the King of Congo to Admiral Sir Rodney Mundy; an armlet of human bones and some other objects obtained on the coast of New Guinea. The Christy collection remains at 103, Victoria-street; two additional rooms have been appropriated to it; it is only open on Fridays, but there were 755 visitors last year. The department of coins and medals acquired above a thousand new objects for exhibition last year. The number of visitors to the ornament room, in which the gold and silver ornaments from the Blacas collection are exhibited, was 7,687. From the department of Natural History the cry is still for room; 17,090 specimens were added in the year 1869. The zoological collections were visited on private days by 2,681 students for the purpose of scientific study. The department of prints and drawings counts among the acquisitions of the year—Mr. Pye's collection of proofs and prints of Turner's *Liber Studiorum* in various states; Mr. Pye was fifty years in bringing the collection to its present perfect condition. The first volume of the catalogue of English satirical prints, political and personal, describing subjects dating from 1537 to the Revolution of 1688, is nearly ready for publication.



[THE OGRESS.]

THE VEILED LADY.

BY THE

Author of "Fairleigh," "The Rival Sisters," &c., &c.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE night upon which the gentle Alice had been abducted was fraught with most acute mental pain.

At length she arose and gazed about her. One chair; a deal table in one corner, surmounted with a half-consumed candle which fitfully burned; a miserable, rickety bed, upon which two old ragged coverlets were thrown, and a pillow, soiled and yellowed by age, with no case, comprised the furnishings of the room. She shuddered, and while her blue eyes were distended with fear, and the muscles of her pale face contracted, she clasped her hands and wildly exclaimed:

"Oh, Heaven, must I remain here?"

At that moment the door was thrown open, and the uncouth female appeared, her face distorted in its expression, while her huge arm was menacingly uplifted, and in harsh, rugged tones, came the words:

"Go to bed!"

Shivering in every joint, with a look of unutterable dread upon her features, Alice crept close to the wall, and closed her eyes that she might not see that countenance, hideous in its deformity.

An instant the woman gazed upon the trembling maiden, then her face relaxed its truculence, and assumed a fawning, terrible grin.

"I'll never hurt in the wurld, at all, at all: it's only funnin' I was, my honny. Cum, now, go to bed, an' give me a kiss."

With a shriek of mingled anguish and dismay, which echoed and re-echoed until it swelled in pitious agony, Alice pressed her quivering form to the wall, and throwing out both hands, while her eyes glared with fear and her face became deathly pale, she frantically cried:

"Away—touch me not! go, go—oh, go away!"

The virago paused, the look of ferocity again returned to her corrugated features, and she shook her fist before the maiden's terrified vision.

Sinking upon her knees and covering her face with her hands, while spasms of grief and horror caused her slight form to sway like a willow-bough. The virago dropped her arm, and muttering a few profane words she left the room.

With a sigh of relief, Alice saw her depart, and then hurriedly fastening the door, removed her shawl from her shoulders, threw it over the rude chair and

seated herself upon it. Weary, and almost exhausted mentally and physically as she was, yet the thought of lying upon that couch was far worse than either.

Slowly the hours dragged on to that imprisoned, sorrowing girl. The candle flickered and went out, and darkness enveloped the dingy room, and with it came new fears that lashed her mind into torture; and there, in that awful abode of crime, in the power of that ogress, in that stifled room with the sombre mantle of night around her, sat that pure maiden, trembling with fear.

At last jaded nature gave way, and for a time blessed sleep rendered her oblivious to her suffering.

An hour passed. She awoke with a start, her heart beat violently, a vague though potent fear seized upon her mind, she trembled, and listened.

In a moment an agonised cry was heard, which, as it rose upon the air, grew into a tremulous wail, and terminated in a sharp, convulsive shriek.

Its echoes, weird and startling, had hardly died away, when in piercing tones the awful words reverberated again and again:

"Murder! Murder!"

And then a mingling of horrible curses, and angry words of maddened men, the moans of those in mortal agony; and then an interval of dreadful silence.

A cold tremor crept over the form of the terrified girl, and crouching down by the door, with her hands pressed against it, as if her delicate fingers could prevent it from being burst open, she raised her snow-white face, and prayed, and feared, and trembled.

The drops of perspiration stood upon her brow, her mind seemed to waver, her heart seemed bursting with terror, and then—a prolonged, unearthly cry.

The hurried footfalls of the ogress were heard, and in a choked voice, seething with rage, the words:

"Curse 'um! Right at my heels—the cellar—quick, or we are lost—they come!"

And then the tramp of feet in hasty retreat, and then on with speed, and excitement increased, on—on!

"Oh, Heaven, what may this mean? Why am I here? Oh what—what has been done?"

And while these words escaped her lips in accents tremulous and weak, Alice stood shivering in the centre of the room, her hands convulsively clasping and unclasping, and her face almost wild with the terrible emotions that depressed her heart and mind.

Suddenly a ray of light illumined the wall over

the couch. Presently a slight, rustling sound was heard, and the bed moved slowly and silently across the room, while at this new and strange phenomenon the girl stood amazed.

But not long, for a trap-door flew open, and revealed the virago standing several feet beneath, while in the dim, hazy light that surrounded her she appeared like some fiend of the nether regions.

With a husky cry of affright Alice pressed her hands to her brow, and recoiled.

With a hurried prayer to Heaven to protect her, with her body cold and quivering in every joint, she moved towards that yawning abyss, and commenced the descent of the ladder. Down, down, she went, and at length reached the ground.

The virago pulled a rope, and the bed in the room above moved back into its place, and the trap closed; then she withdrew the ladder, and seated herself upon a barrel.

An instant more and the quick tramp of heavy feet was heard in the room above, the door of the apartment which Alice had so lately left fell in with a loud noise, and the vigilant officers were scouring the room in their efforts to capture the criminal.

With that curiosity which, strange as it is, will arise in moments of greatest peril, Alice gazed around and wondered.

The cellar was of oblong shape, upon the side of which were shelves that extended the whole length, and were filled with silks and other costly goods. These goods were destined for several large "houses," and were considered to be much better as well as cheaper, from the fact that they had never been contaminated by the slightest contact with the officials of the Custom House.

An illustration of the manner in which many merchants accumulate wealth through "long years of honest industry."

Bewildered, with acute pains shooting through her head, and her body weak, the poor oppressed girl sank upon a bale, and buried her face in her hands.

The virago still sat upon the barrel her chin supported by her prodigious hands, and her coarse face contorted into a grin of malignant triumph, while opposite to her stood a man of medium height and size, with sharp, cunning features, and an evil, restless eye.

A silence of the grave—a silence to which the dim, yellowish rays of the candle gave a sickly, deadly effect, and seemed to change the bright red of the hag's hideous face to a pale orange, which increased its horrid and revolting aspect, and rendered it ghastly and sallow, while the gray shadows, like phantom guardians of the illegitimate treasure contained in that dreary den, flitted hither and

thither, now standing at the side of that quiet, sinister man, now bending over the anguish-stricken girl, and then kneeling, as if in fear, before that revolting female.

And still that oppressive quietude continued, relieved only at intervals by the movements of the officers in the rooms above, who seemed determined to trace the fugitive to his hiding-place.

Alice dared not raise her eyes. The damp, heavy air filled her nostrils with a repulsive odour; and the stagnation of everything around her, added to the tumultuous emotions which caused her form to tremble.

The hours dragged on. The commotion above had ceased—all was quiet; the officers, wearied by their fruitless search, had retired.

The ogress arose, shook Alice roughly by the arm, and then dragged her towards the ladder, which she had replaced a moment before, opened the trap, and commanded her to ascend.

With difficulty, for her strength had diminished in consequence of her continued agitation, and by great exertion, Alice managed to reach the room above, and staggering to a chair, sank upon it, and remained passive. In a few moments she was asleep, and remained so until morning, although she was sitting upon a hard chair and in a cold room.

A week passed away.

Very little did she eat during that time. The coarse food which her jailer set before her she could not touch, thoughts of it even produced nausea, and her only articles of subsistence were tea and some biscuits, which were secretly conveyed to her by one of the children in the house, who was only induced to do so by liberal rewards.

She had suffered physically as well as mentally, and the combined effects of both were painfully apparent. The roses had almost faded from the fair face, and the blue orbs were listless, and burned with a weary light.

And yet no help came. Every night her low sobs echoed plaintively through the room, as darkness again closed in, and she was still an inmate of that dreadful abode. But there were other things more horrible which she was obliged to endure, for the virago, who knew that the girl detested her, experienced a wicked satisfaction in compelling her to sit in the same room with her.

Again 'twas evening, and the heiress sat with her hands tightly clasped, and her pale face uplifted to Heaven in mute appeal. She had faith that sometime she should receive aid, and in her present dreadful situation, it was consoling to sit and look upward, and hope.

In the middle of the room stood a rough, unseemly table, at the side of which was a wide, high-backed chair.

Doubled, almost, in this piece of secondhand furniture, reposed from some dingy sale-room in the New Cut, was the virago, her ponderous arms folded, and her bleared, discoloured eyes turned upon the suffering girl with an implacable stare, while her features were twisted into an inhuman look of malicious exultation.

"Arrah! but its fine yer lookin' to-night, so it is; and how be ye afther fallin, my little milk-face?" she cried.

A tremor shook the sylph-like form of the heiress, and she raised her eyes, but made no reply.

The heavy hand of the ogress descended upon the table with a crash, and while her expression changed to one of anger, she waddled towards the terrified maiden, lifting her huge hand high above her head, and while her facial muscles twitched with ferocity, and her horned tooth grated, she yelled:

"What d'ye want?"

"I want this girl, and I'm about to take her!"

The chill which had seemed to stagnate the blood in the veins of Alice was now relieved by those words, which though spoken in a hard, unpleasant voice, sounded on her ear like harmonious music, and from her crushed heart went forth the words:

"Thank—oh, thank Heaven!"

The virago struck the revolver from his grasp, clutched him by the neck, and threw him to the floor.

With the strength of desperation the man struggled, but 'twas fruitless; those arms, like the deadly embrace of the cobra, held him powerless, and in rage and mortification the man writhed, but could not break her grasp.

Again gloom fell upon the heart of the heiress, and bright hope was extinguished; while the shadows of her terrible existence again loomed up around her, and suggested more anguish, more horror.

But at that instant, when grim foreboding again entered her mind, a hand was laid upon her arm.

She started, turned, and beheld a second man, who motioned her to follow him.

With hope once more revived, though still faint with fear, lest freedom so near should be again dashed away, she moved silently towards him.

Injudiciously he leaned forward, and grasped her hand.

The ogress saw the action. Her face grew livid, and, relinquishing her hold upon her victim, she ran after the fugitives with all the speed which her obesity would admit of, meantime uttering revolting words.

Alice saw the gleam in her frightful eyes, saw the cruel resolve upon those horrible features, and, clasping her companion's hand more firmly, she exclaimed, in a quivering voice:

"Oh, haste! She comes! she comes!"

An instant the man gazed backwards, then catching her slight form in his arms, he dashed through the long entry, down the stairs, and into the alley.

"She has reached the steps in pursuit! Fly! oh, fly!" gasped the maiden, and clung to her companion's shoulder.

Panting for breath and almost exhausted, but with indomitable will, he again started forward, and in a moment reached the street. A carriage stood at the kerb; the door was thrown open. Alice was placed therein—the man entered with a leap—the door clashed to—the horses felt the stinging lash, and bounded away.

For a few moments Alice could not speak. The incidents had followed each other with such rapidity that her mind was almost benumbed. Then, as the joyful realisation of her liberty rushed full upon her, her face flushed, her heart beat once more with happiness, and, grasping her companion's hand, while gratitude beamed from her eyes, she gladly exclaimed:

"How earnestly—how truly I thank you, you can never know. You have rescued me from a place where life was but a living death."

He bowed, smiled pleasantly, but said nothing.

She was somewhat surprised at his silence, but gave it not a moment's thought, for her great joy at once again being free usurped every other emotion, and reclining on the cushions, she gazed meditatively out of the window. Anon a bright smile illumined her features as she thought what pleasure she should experience in welcoming her aunt, for her appreciation of her home, although it had at times been distasteful to her, was vastly increased by her experience during the past week.

Presently doubts mingled with her anticipation, and cast a shade over it. She knew not where she was going. She knew not who her companion was, or what his purpose might be. With her apprehension again aroused by these reflections, she gazed steadily into the face of her *vis-à-vis*, and in as calm a voice as she could command, queried:

"Will you tell me where we are going?"

"To your home, of course," he answered, rather impatiently; "where else should we go?"

"Pardon me," she penitently observed; "it was wrong in me to mistrust you, but I have been deceived so often of late that I am not quite so credulous as formerly."

Again he bowed, and that was all.

She gave no attention to his peculiarities; they had no interest for her. She was oblivious to everything but the all-absorbing thought of again reaching home—no, even as she considered herself perfectly happy, memory gave her cause for regret; an incident which had been until this moment superseded in her mind by her own troubles, now returned, and suggested the question: "Where is Mr. Dikely?"

The query marred her happiness, disturbed her contentment. How selfish she had been in not once thinking of him! he who had saved her from danger so many times, and now had lost his liberty, and—oh, dread thought—perhaps his life, in battling for her.

The awful contingency caused her eyes to droop and her face to again become sad, which was not relieved until the carriage stopped, and then it was temporarily dispelled by the rush of feeling consequent upon again beholding her home.

Presently the carriage door was thrown open, and without waiting for assistance she bounded from the vehicle, ran up the steps, and rang the bell.

In a moment the little servant appeared. As she saw Alice she started back, threw up her hands, and gleefully exclaimed:

"Oh, Miss Alice, I'm so glad you're come back! Where have you been? Oh, there's been such goings on here, you never saw the like of it, nor anybody else. Oh, how pale you are, and I've been—"

"What is it? Are either ill?" interrupted Alice, a dread fear striking her heart.

The child lifted her hands, and shaking her head dolefully, wonderingly replied:

"Oh, Miss Alice, they've both been gone ever since you—"

"What?" cried the heiress, in alarm. "You do not mean that neither of them are here?"

"Yes, I do," rejoined the little servant, raising her eyebrows; "and what's more, they haven't been

here since the night you went away. You know, that was my evening out, wasn't Miss Angelina angry 'cos that happened to be my night away, and she going to the theatre with Mr. Smilessoft! But what am I talking about? I've got such a tongue, I wish 'twas big enough to eat; but, lor, I couldn't catch it if it was, for it always keeps a-running! Bless me, I forgot all about my poor mistress and your poor aunt. I've lived here all 'lone since that night, and I vow it's been dull enough, for if Miss Angelina was cross, it's better to have cross company than 'tis to be 'lone with your own shadder. I hate my shadder, it always gets into bed first and frightens me! But, oh, dear, I come plaguery near forgettin' to tell you. You're heard of the cross-eyed old maid 'cross the street, hain't ye? Oh, you must. Well, she says that Miss Angelina and Miss Seraphina have run away with Mr. Smilessoft; but, lor, he must be foolish to take both of um, one of um is enough to kill him in three months—but, lor, Miss Alice, are you faint? Are you ill?"

"A glass of water, please," articulated Alice, whose excitement, so long continued and varied, had at last exhausted her.

"Yes, yes. Somethin' nice, too, you see if I don't."

And having assisted Alice into the drawing-room, talking very rapidly in the meantime, the little servant scampered downstairs. Presently she returned with a bottle of wine and several slices of cake. Placing the tray upon the table, she tossed her head with an air of assurance, and ejaculated:

"There, that's better than water—you don't drink though? I didn't fill the glass? Well, I will. There now, drink, that'll do good."

Mechanically Alice set the glass upon the table, and then partook of the cake, and feeling somewhat refreshed, mentally and physically, she asked:

"Where did you get this wine, Phoebe? I was not aware that Miss Angelina allowed herself such luxuries."

"Oh, lor! Miss Alice," replied the little servant, placing her hands under her apron and drawing it slowly up to her chin, while she bobbed her head in an oracular manner; "I knows a good many things. She's too stingy to get it for herself. She bought a half-dozen bottles—'tween you and I they cost thirty-five shillings, and that was a discount—'cos Mr. Smilessoft liked it! She don't like gentlemen's company."

"You are a very naughty girl, Phoebe," said Alice, reprovingly, though a slight smile played around the corners of her mouth.

"I know it. But we've forgot all about Miss Angelina. Where do you suppose she is? I wouldn't be naughty any more if she'd come back."

The reference to the subject, which almost providentially had been for a few minutes withheld from her mind, for rest was absolutely required, renewed her sad and agitating thoughts, and with a deep sigh, she responded:

"Heaven only knows, but I fondly hope that she is safe and well."

"Oh, Lor! so do I," chattered the little servant, "'cos I shouldn't have no home. I can't stay here much longer if she don't come, for there's nothin' much to eat, and I can't cook, and if I could there ain't much to cook, and there's a fine pickle all together. I tell you, Miss Alice, I've been awfully fretted at nights stayin' here alone."

With a motion of her hand, the heiress commanded silence. She could no longer endure the girl's garrulity, and yet it had suggested a question which up to this moment had not arisen in her mind—where she should stay.

She could prepare her own food had she the necessary funds to procure the articles with, but what little she had had she expended in bribing the little messenger. What should she do?

The question was productive of new and peculiar pain. Had she been freed from that den only to find herself without a home—without money—and she an heiress?

While thus reflecting, the individual who had rescued her entered, and gazed alternately from one to the other.

At length Alice raised her eyes. As she saw him, an expression of surprise hovered o'er her features, and she queried:

"Why do you wait?"

He smiled slightly, and rejoined:

"I have heard your conversation. It is evident that you cannot remain here—come with me."

She regarded him searchingly a moment, and again asked:

"What assurance have I that your purpose is honourable? Where would you go?"

"You have the proof of my recent acts; I would take you to a place of safety."

There was a quiet dignity in his manner, which, added to his former upright course, convinced her of the truth of his words, and she apologetically said:

"Pardon me, I will trust you the second time."

"Oh, Miss Alice!" ejaculated the little servant, dismayed at the prospect, "what shall I do all alone here? I shall starve to death, and die."

That was a perplexing question, and Alice knew not what to say.

The man, who seemed to understand quite well the state of affairs, and have a provision for every exigency, asked:

"Have you enough to live upon for a few days?"

"Oh, yes," answered the untutored girl.

"Very well. If Miss Angelina does not return in two days, you shall be taken care of."

Alice regarded him wondering. His calm, assured manner; the perfect understanding he evinced of every adverse circumstance and its proper remedy puzzled her, and she queried:

"Who are you, and how are you enabled to speak so confidently?"

He ignored her question, and remarked:

"Come, we must go."

Alice took her hat and sash from the hands of the little servant, spoke a few cheering words to her, and then followed her unknown companion to the carriage.

The little servant's face elongated considerably, and she nearly whimpered as the carriage rolled away under the glare of the gas-lights.

Lying back upon the cushions, Alice closed her eyes and reflected upon this new phase of her strange life. The idea of the two ladies eloping with Mr. Smilesort was preposterous. Where then was Miss Angelina? That question could not be answered, and with a weary sigh she consigned it to time.

At length the carriage stopped. She opened her eyes. She was in a fashionable square. She alighted, and was conducted up the steps of an elegant mansion, whose silver door-plate bore the words—
"Samuel Wilton."

(To be continued.)

REGINALD WARNER.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN a few days had elapsed, the adventurer felt temporarily secure in his position.

He telegraphed the news of his arrival to Mr. Reginald Warner and received an immediate reply, giving him the name of a firm where an unlimited credit had been opened for him. The message went on to say that Mr. Warner would join his son, and be present at his marriage.

Had this latter intelligence been received at an earlier date it would have overwhelmed the impostor. Even now, though he had passed through severe ordeals undetected, the thought of being confronted with the man he claimed as a father was by no means pleasant. Certainly his personal appearance would be satisfactory, but in the familiar intercourse of father and son questions would be asked, past events called up, family secrets touched upon, which would seriously embarrass him and tax his utmost ingenuity to handle.

He seriously considered the propriety of receding from his false position, of drawing on his bankers for as large an amount as they would advance, and then leaving the country before the arrival of Reginald Warner.

But few men who think themselves on the high road to fortune are willing to abandon it before the harvest is half reaped. Especially is this the case with men who are engaged in hazardous speculations, such as gambling, horse-racing and stock operations.

Besides the greed of gold, the ambition of the convict had begun to develop itself. Something that he called love attached him to Clara Vane; the hope of for ever abandoning a dishonoured name, and of winning a brilliant social position had its fascination; and the chances of complete success appeared so great to his matchless audacity that he finally decided to play out the game, come what might.

But he resolved to be prepared for the worst, and to use his credit at the bankers' freely, converting the sums he received into diamonds, by which means he could carry a large amount of wealth upon his person, and even, if compelled to beat a retreat at a moment's notice, would still be a comparatively rich man.

He was received by the bankers with great cordiality. They not only afforded every business facility, but tendered him their social influence to secure him a wide circle of acquaintance in the world of fashion in which they moved themselves.

The adventurer's first draft was a heavy one, but it was paid without a question.

He expended a large sum in diamond jewellery.

Thence he went to a horse-dealer's and purchased a magnificent saddle-horse to ride in the park with Miss Vane, whom her adventure in the Bois de Boulogne had not cured of a passion for equestrian exercise.

That same afternoon he tested the qualities of the fiery animal, and made a decided sensation, as he passed the lovely Clara, who was nearly as well mounted as himself, and rode with equal fearlessness.

The adventurer was now fairly launched upon the tide of fashion, and bore himself as if born to the position. His education in France, where grace and politeness are universal, enabled him to pass without effort as a well-bred gentleman. A long-descended noble could have picked no flaw in his deportment. Gay, witty, and accomplished, he fascinated all with whom he came in contact.

Yet in spite of his resolute nature, consciousness of guilt and anxiety for the future, often poisoned his enjoyment. There were times when the smile faded from his lips, and a stern, haggard, even repulsive expression appeared in its place unconsciously. Clara could not help seeing that her lover was changed; he often looked as she had never seen him look in Paris. At first she attributed this to the hardships he had undergone; but those were all passed, his health was unimpaired, his present surroundings were calculated to obliterate all unpleasant memories and it was evident to her that he had some secret cause of distress, which he was concealing from her, his affianced bride.

When she delicately hinted her suspicions, he gaily rallied her and protested that he was perfectly happy. But the old, worn, severe, haggard look would come back in spite of him.

The expectation of Mr. Warner's arrival was enough of itself to occasion this depression. Yet he felt that he had need of all his energy and all his resources.

To strengthen his resolution and keep up his spirits he resorted to an expedient never employed by any one with impunity—the stimulus of wine, at first, and then, as the less dangerous beverage failed, the excitement of yet stronger potations. More than once he went to bed in a state closely bordering on intoxication. Had Clara Vane seen him at such a time it might have been fatal to his hopes.

There was one person who did perceive that his habits, cautiously as he sought to veil them, were becoming irregular. This was Dr. Summers, who, while avoiding the Vane's, had, from the purest motives, however, constituted himself a spy upon the actions of a man of the eve of the most intimate relation with a family he honoured and respected.

One night, too, the doctor saw the man who had supplanted him enter a well-known gambling-house, and he subsequently ascertained from Hamilton, who was a young man about town, that Warner was an habitual frequenter of that establishment.

After well weighing all the hazards of the step, Summers decided to follow the example of the man he was watching. He knew the proprietor of the establishment from having successfully carried him through a dangerous illness, and readily obtained a promise from him that the doctor's incognito should be respected whenever he chose to present himself.

One evening, therefore, dressed in a threadbare black suit, he was introduced by him to Warner as Mr. Marvin, a most skilful surgeon, but reduced, as he privately whispered to the convict, through "passing the rosy and handling the dice."

The convict resolved to cultivate the acquaintance of the man of skill.

Thus, then, we have the convict, pursuing his nefarious plans, armed at all points, but with a single, perhaps fatal flaw in his cuirass—self-indulgence—and that vulnerable point known to a skilled and determined adversary.

Matters were in this condition when, walking down Pall Mall early one morning, the adventurer was confronted by the very last man he could have expected or wished to meet in London, his father—known to him as Maurice Grammont and Paul Rivers—but never suspected, it will be remembered, to be a member of the Warner family.

Consternation rendered the adventurer dumb. What was his surprise, however, when this dreaded person, whose authority he had hoped to have shaken off for ever, took off his hat humbly, and bowing respectfully, said:

"Mr. Vivian Warner, you do not remember me."

Instantly it flashed on the adventurer's mind that his father, like so many others, had mistaken him for the person he had assumed to be.

Therefore he said coldly:

"I beg pardon, Mr. —"

"Grammont," replied the other. "You must remember having engaged me as an English teacher in Paris—you must remember coming to my room in the Hotel Beau Sejour—my advising you to leave Paris, which you declined to do?"

"Ah!" thought the convict, "this is what passed between them at that interview, while I was watching at the outer door."

"I remember," he said, shaking hands, "that you took a singular interest in me."

"I told you it was because you resembled a dear young friend of mine, who died early in life."

"That may or may not be," thought the adventurer.

"I was deeply interested," continued the so-called Grammont, "in your adventures in Italy, as when you came so near being the victim of a villain."

"A villain!" thought the adventurer. "Is it thus he speaks of his own son?"

"But the fellow met with his deserts," continued Grammont.

"Yes; he was shot dead in the skirmish—a chance shot from one of his own confederates."

The old man's eyes fairly sparkled with pleasure.

"Thank Heaven! there is one scoundrel less in the world!" he said.

That Grammont, alias Rivers, was a man steeped in crime, the adventurer well knew; but that he was so destitute of all human feeling as to rejoice in the death of his own son, whom he had trained to every vice, was so revolting, so unparalleled, and exhibited such utter depravity that even his hardened nature was appalled. And yet this man could take a warm interest in an utter stranger, for such, of course, he supposed Vivian to be, in his perfect ignorance of the secret history of the Warner family, and of all those mysterious facts with which the reader is acquainted. He found it difficult to conceal his horror and aversion.

This reputed father went on to say:

"Allow me, sir, to congratulate you on your approaching marriage."

The adventurer simply bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"May I ask," he said, with an effort, "what you are doing in this part of the world?"

"Pursuing my old business—teaching languages," answered his father. "If you have need of me, I shall be most happy to serve you, sir."

He pulled out a dingy card—one of his old Paris cards, in which the address had been altered in pencil to one in London.

"If I have occasion for you I will call, said the adventurer, pocketing the card.

And so they parted—father and son—the former looking wistfully after the young man as he strode off with a firm step, the most elegant gentleman in the street. Then he turned into a side street, muttering:

"Not yet! not yet!" and sought his obscure lodgings in Soho.

The adventurer resolved never to meet this man again; he was too horrible a blot on the face of humanity—a father, deaf to the voice of nature. Even the branded convict recoiled from such an anomaly.

Little did he dream the secret that the man he had called father was a Warner, and his uncle, and beheld in the supposed Vivian, his son and his darling; that to see that son he had crossed the ocean—so complicated was the web of their eventful history.

Yet though he never wished to meet his unnatural parent again, that very afternoon, as he cantered up Rotten-Row, beside Miss Vane, the convict saw the old man standing on the sidewalk, and coldly replied to his humble, almost servile salutation.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN the vessel on which Mr. Reginald Warner was a passenger reached her destination, Southampton, our adventurer could not avoid going there to receive him, though seriously doubting how he should be able to recognise the man he claimed as a father. His anxiety, however, was but of short duration, for as he was crowding his way through the passengers on deck, a voice called out, "Vivian!" and responding with the cry of "father," the convict felt himself locked in the arms of an elderly man, whom he had never seen before.

The moment he had a chance to scrutinise his face the impostor was perfectly astounded at beholding the exact counterpart of his own father—a mysterious and unaccountable resemblance.

As soon as the first greetings were over, Mr. Warner said:

"But here is your old nurse."

"Janet Prince!" exclaimed the adventurer, who had found out all about her in Vivian's journal, and he shook hands warmly with a gray-haired woman in black.

"You haven't changed a particle, Mr. Vivian," said she.

Mr. Warner explained that Janet had lost her husband, that she long cherished a desire of coming to England to establish herself, and that he had accordingly brought her with him.

The morning was passed in that confidential intercourse which became the supposed relationship of the parties. Conrad, quick and watchful, catching every clue that Mr. Warner let fall, did not make a

single mistake. His possession and study of the true Vivian's journal was of incalculable service, for it enabled him to make allusions to by-gone incidents at Warner Hall that would have confounded even a person whose suspicions had been awakened.

On arriving in town the adventurer presented his alleged father to the Vanes, who were charmed by his kindness and affability. Thus the dread arrival had produced no catastrophe, but had even strengthened the impostor's position.

It was understood that the marriage should soon take place, and preparations for that event were immediately commenced—fermidable preparations, for the wealth and position of the high contracting parties entailed a splendour and outlay that humbler families are happily spared.

Some days previous to the arrival of Mr. Warner the adventurer had drawn very heavily on his bankers and used the funds thus obtained in the secret purchase of precious stones, but he accounted to Mr. Warner for the amounts by telling him that he had been investing heavily—a course which Mr. Warner heartily approved of.

The arrival of Mr. Warner checked somewhat the irregularities of the adventurer, but he still stealthily visited the gaming-table, where a very close intimacy sprang up between him and Dr. Marvin, *alias* Summers. Whenever the adventurer appeared at the gaming-house the proprietor of the establishment privately sent for the doctor, who lived in the neighbourhood, and, if it was a possible thing, the latter always responded to the summons in the shabby clothes, and under the name of Dr. Marvin. Conrad had no doubt that he was what he appeared to be, a man of splendid genius and professional skill, but ruined by bad habits.

There was another person who watched the goings and comings of the adventurer with feverish anxiety—the disguised Ralph Warner. He passed a great deal of his time in Grosvenor Square, from which he could see the convict starting for his afternoon ride. He was happy if he could only catch a glimpse of the outlaw at the drawing-room window of the Vanes. In the evening he tracked his footsteps. But he was very curious in all his movements now that Reginald had arrived—the hated and wronged brother whom he was not yet quite prepared to meet.

The cold weather was now beginning, and this gave him an opportunity for wearing a cloak and a muffler, which, together with a slouched hat drawn down over the eyes, was a sufficient disguise from casual scrutiny. Time and exposure, too, had darkened his complexion, and grayed his hair; yet his wonderful resemblance to his brother still existed when his face was seen wholly uncovered.

But while this man, who, with all his wickedness cherished in his heart one tender sentiment, an adoring love for his offspring, was thus following, by night and by day the object of his affection, his own footsteps were tracked by an unseen, unsuspected follower—a follower that came closer to him hour by hour—the dread, viewless summoner—death!

Ralph Warner bore in his frame the seeds of that disease to which his uncle, Sir Lawrence, had fallen a victim. At the very moment when he counted on the complete success of his schemes—on the triumph of his long-planned vengeance, his hours were numbered.

Suddenly, almost in front of his own door in dingy Soho, he fell, struck with paralysis. The blow was not immediately mortal. Transported to his room, he found himself helpless on his bed, with a physician, who had been summoned in his haste by his landlord, beside him.

With a feeble voice he asked what had happened to him, demanding to know the worst.

The physician told him he had not long to live, and that if he had friends, he had better communicate with them at once.

Often the hardened criminal who has pursued a career of fraud and violence, who has heard sentence pronounced upon him with stoical indifference, who, during long months of imprisonment has resisted the appeals of the clergyman, who has affirmed his innocence repeatedly to all comers and all questioners, breaks down at the very last hour of his existence on the fatal scaffold, and there admits his guilt and confesses the justice of his fate, finding relief in full confession.

Thus it was with Ralph Warner. When informed of his danger, and that there was no escape, his iron nature gave way. His heaped-up iniquities appeared revealed in a light in which he had never before beheld them.

He craved now to behold his injured brother—not to boast of his wickedness as he had once designed, but to implore his forgiveness for the irreparable injury he had inflicted on him.

The landlord consented to carry a message to Reginald Warner, to deliver it in person and bring

back an answer. The doomed man wrote with great difficulty on a slip of paper.

"Sir: A dying man implores the favour of a visit from yourself and your son to hear his last requests. He is not in need of money, but of sympathy. The bearer will conduct you to his residence."

That was all, but it was enough to secure a visit from the kind-hearted Reginald. The convict, when the landlord mentioned the name Grammost as that of his dying guest, informed Mr. Warner that he was slightly acquainted with him.

A cab was called, and the three were rapidly driven away. On reaching the house, the landlord pointed out the room, and Reginald Warner and the convict entered the chamber of death.

The moment he beheld the sufferer, Reginald recognised him, in spite of the changes that age and his terrible malady had produced.

"My brother Ralph!" he exclaimed, deeply affected, and stretched forth his hand to the dying man.

But Ralph, though he could use his right hand, drew it back and shook his palsied head.

"What!" exclaimed Reginald, "is your heart still estranged from me? Yet I never wronged you, and I would have aided you had you not hidden yourself from my knowledge during these long years."

The adventurer watched this scene with the most intense interest. Already the mysterious resemblance between the two men had been accounted for.

"No," replied Ralph, with a groan. "You never wronged me—but I have wronged you so deeply—so irreparably that I dare not take your hand."

"You judge yourself too harshly, Ralph," said Reginald, gently and soothingly. "It is yourself that you have wronged, but you certainly have never troubled me since we parted after our uncle's funeral."

"Hear me," said the dying man, "and then offer me your hand if you can. I have done you as deadly a wrong as one man can do another. Search the annals of guilt and you will find no crueler wrong than I have done you. I have robbed you—" Here he paused for breath.

"Dear brother, calm yourself," said Reginald, gently, for he believed the sufferer's mind was wandering. "You have not robbed me—I have missed nothing."

"I tell you," said Ralph, "that I robbed you of your most inestimable treasure; and for that deed the fiends are waiting for my soul."

"Pray calm yourself," said Reginald.

"You think me mad," said Ralph, "but I know whereof I speak. Know then that when I found that my uncle had disinherited me, and made you his heir, that I had failed in my plan of changing his will, I devised a subtler and a darker vengeance. To you and me children were born at the same time, each resembling the other, as each of us was the likeness of the other. Your infant was confided to Janet Prince at the lodge. Thither I stole one night with my offspring, and by the power I had over the woman, compelled her to give me your boy, and placed mine in her arms. My son, reared by you in luxury, stands beside you."

"You, my father!" cried the adventurer.

"Yes," said Ralph, "for you I sinned; to give you education, wealth, and honour, from which I was shut out by my own act. I perpetrated the deed I have just avowed."

Reginald refused to credit the tale at first, believing it to spring from an imagination disordered by disease. But its truth could be tested at once—he sent a messenger for Janet Prince.

Ralph detected incredulity in his expression, and repeated his declaration.

Then it was the horrible truth—too horrible to be believed at first, began to force itself upon Reginald's conviction.

"Unhappy man," he cried; "if this young man is your son, what did you do with mine? You murdered him!"

"I did not murder his life," he answered, "but I did worse. Do you remember, Reginald, what the revolutionists of Paris did to the little child of Louis the Sixteenth when he fell into their hands? They perverted his moral nature; they taught him to swear, and to sing foul songs, and to insult his father and mother—but he was happier than your boy—for he died in childhood."

A glimpse of the truth flashed on the mind of Reginald.

"Do you mean to say," he groaned, "that you treated my poor boy—my poor innocent child, as those wretches did the prince?"

"Worse, worse!" cried the dying man; "for I nurtured his body while I ruined his soul. I protected his life while I robbed him of his honour, till at last, he—kill me for the deed!—he was branded, sentenced to the hulks at Toulon for life."

With a wild cry, Reginald rushed to the bed of the dying sinner as if to seize and strangle him—but his strength suddenly gave way, and he would have fallen to the floor in a deathly swoon had not the adventurer caught him in his arms, and placed him on a sofa.

"I believe you have killed him," said the convict, as he bent over the insensible form.

"Call me father," said Ralph. "Let me hear that word from your lips before I die."

"Never," said the impostor. "I will never call that man father whose crimes disgrace humanity itself."

Had he been what he professed; had he really been Vivian Warner, he might have spoken thus—but what gave venom to his words was his learning from the lips of the criminal that he himself had been deliberately trained to guilt, and sent to prison, a branded felon, for purposes of vengeance.

"Disowned by him," groaned Ralph. "It wanted but this."

Reginald Warner was long in reviving to consciousness in spite of the efforts of the adventurer.

Meanwhile Janet Prince arrived, and aided in restoring the stricken man. Her face, as she bent over him, was the first that Reginald recognised. Starting up, he pushed her from him with violence, exclaiming:

"Wretched woman. The hand of death is closing on your accomplice, but you shall live to know how a wronged father can punish."

"Janet," said the dying man. "I, Ralph Warner, have confessed all—but I admit that I forced you to aid me in robbing my brother of his child."

Janet Prince fell on her knees, and raised her hands to Heaven. Then she addressed herself to Mr. Reginald Warner.

"Sir," said she, "as Heaven is my witness you have been spared the sorrow that your brother designed for you. He came to me and proposed to change the children. Terrified by his threats, I consented."

"You consented!" cried Reginald.

"Hear me out, sir. I consented; but when I came to where your child lay in his cradle, the possibility of saving him occurred to me. If your brother did not follow me all would be well. Rapidly I carried my scheme into execution. I did not change the children; I only changed their clothes, and gave him back his own child!"

Ralph raised himself up in bed by a superhuman effort, and glared with wild eyes upon the speaker.

"Is this true?" he cried.

"It is gospel truth!" said the woman. "I deceived you to avoid a deeper crime; and when I fell upon my knees and prayed Heaven to forgive my guilt, you departed without a shadow of suspicion."

Nothing more terrible than the face of the dying man can possibly be imagined. His face was horribly distorted, and his eyes rolled in his head.

"You gave me back my boy," he said; "and I—I—who adored him, corrupted him, perverted him, made a felon of him—of my own boy—sent him to Toulon!"

"Unhappy man," said Reginald, moved to compassion by his agony. "I will procure his pardon. He is young; he shall begin life anew; he shall retrieve his past."

"Too late! too late!" cried Ralph. "He is dead!"

"Dead!" cried Reginald.

"Yes," said Ralph; "he escaped from Toulon—took a disguise—came to Paris—called himself Craven—betrayed your son—my son, as I thought at the time—into the hands of the brigands—and was shot dead! Dead! dead!"

For one moment—one moment only—the adventurer was on the point of relieving his dying father by confessing who he was, and telling his uncle that Vivian Warner was alive but a prisoner in the hands of Italian brigands.

He had even opened his lips to speak, but at that moment Ralph Warner fell back on his pillow—one convulsion shook his frame, and he was no more.

Conrad's unexpected purpose did not spring from remorse, but was an impulsive movement prompted by witnessing the intolerable agony of a fellow-creature.

The moment the breath had left the body of his father he was as callous and determined as before. And, indeed, the convict had no reason to love the unhappy wretch who lay dead before him, for he it was who had led him step by step in the career of crime till he writhed beneath the branding-iron at Toulon.

Thus Ralph Warner died, unconscious that his son was alive and present at his bedside—died in the moment that his long-cherished scheme of vengeance had been foiled by a woman's heart and act—a miserable death!

But Conrad! He stood on firmer ground than ever. When he heard Ralph's confession of the

changed children his prospects seemed threatened with a sudden eclipse, for if Vivian Warner was not the son of Reginald, nor of Ralph, he could not have expected to inherit Reginald's fortune. The confession of Janet Prince restored matters to their former basis. Vivian was truly the son and heir of Reginald Warner, and he, Conrad, was acknowledged to be that Vivian, who was lingering in prison three thousand miles away. One of the loveliest girls in London would soon be his bride. Only one evidence could betray him—the felon's brand upon his shoulder.

It was decided that Ralph Warner's secret should be respected. Under the assumed name of Grammont he was carried to the grave. Only Mr. Warner, the adventurer, Janet Prince and the landlord attending his funeral.

The former shed tears over the lost brother; Janet wept—for though the dead man had wronged her, she had once loved him but too well; even the landlord was moved at the sudden taking off of one of whom he knew no ill. Only Ralph's son stood cold, and tearless.

(To be continued.)

MONTROSE; ON, THE RED KNIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

I have done with fear; now, nothing but pure love
And power and pity shall have part in me;
I will not throw them such a spirit in flesh.
To make their prey on. Though he be mad indeed,
It is the goodliest madness ever smote
Upon man's heart. A kingly knight—in faith.

Chastelard.

THE time of our story is at the close of the twelfth century. The third crusade had terminated, and a truce, or treaty of peace, to continue in force for three years and eight months, had been concluded between Richard of England and the Sultan Saladin, and signed by the chiefs of the Christian and Mussulman Princes. By the articles of this treaty, the Christians were to hold certain towns and castles in Palestine, subject to their own government; they were also to hold the sea-coast from Jaffa to Tyre; and were, moreover, to enjoy the privilege of devotion at Jerusalem. As soon as the truce had been established, and duly celebrated by tourney and festivity, Richard left the Holy Land, and the worn and weary crusaders who remained behind promised themselves a season of rest. But their rest was not destined to be of long duration.

Saladin, when he had seen the King of England depart, retired to Damascus, where, in less than a year, he died. The great sultan had not named his successor; and to the mighty power of the single genius which had swayed and controlled the Moslem hosts succeeded an eager throng of ambitious and intriguing aspirants. And this change in the affairs of the Mussulmans was attended by mutations equally unfavourable and calamitous among the Christians. There were jealousies and rivalries, growing into bitter animosities; there was lust of power, and lust of wealth; and the arms which had been turned to rest from battle with the Infidel were drawn in fratricidal conflict. Ambitious followers of the Cross, aspiring to place and power, hesitated not to propose terms of treacherous alliance which disaffected Moslem chieftains were but too willing to accept. And thus it came to pass that the spirit of the truce was broken; and he who would be true to his own cause, were his service of Christ or of Islam, knew not where an enemy might be lurking, nor in what guise.

It was near the noon of a pleasant day in mid-spring. The foliage of the tall palms was exuberant, and the air was soft and balmy. In a deep Syrian valley, within the southern confines of the district of Tripoli, travelled a party of four horsemen. He who rode in advance bore upon his shield the Dragon of St. Malo, and was Sir Raymond, at present Count of Tripoli. He had hardly reached the middle age, and was a knight of fame and renown—a brave warrior, and a true man. Upon his head he wore a velvet bonnet, from the side of which waved a white ostrich plume, while his steel helmet hung at the saddle-bow. He wore a suit of linked mail, over which was thrown a light cloak of purple silk, a colour denoting his rank as a territorial governor.

Next to the Count of Tripoli rode a younger knight—one who had not seen more than five-and-twenty years; but whose good lance and trenchant sword had made him a name among the best and bravest of the soldiers of the Cross. He was tall and robust of frame; with a carriage of exceeding ease

and grace; and nature had given him plenty of brawn and muscle without detracting in the least from perfect symmetry of form; his face was a handsome one, despite the strongly marked features. The brow was broad and high, the eyes blue, and his hair clung about his finely-shaped head in closely clustering curls of a warm, golden hue. His armour was heavier than the count's, being of plate, and highly polished. He wore a light surcoat of blue silk, and a bonnet of the same colour covered his head. This was Sir Robert Douglas, the young Marquis of Doon, the only living male representative of one of the noblest families of Scotland. His father had been slain two years before, while fighting by the side of Richard of England, and thus the title had descended to the son.

The third man of the party seemed a stout knight, though not so tall as either of his companions. His breadth of shoulders and unusual depth of chest indicated physical strength; but lacked that ease and agility which come of a better form and proportion. His face was dark to a swartheness that was not entirely the result of exposure; the features were strong and angular; with a broad, low brow overhanging a pair of deep-set piercing eyes. His age might have been five-and-thirty; and the legend upon his shield bespoke him a Gascon. His name was Jasper St. Julien, and he owned the Castle of Buchala, near the eastern slope of Mount Hermon. His armour was of plate, and serviceable; but the spots of rust upon its surface were not comely.

The fourth man was an honest, pleasant-faced fellow, wearing a doublet and hose of stout leather, the exposed parts being covered with overlapping scales of polished iron. This was Florio Basard, an attendant upon Count Raymond.

Their road lay in a pleasant valley, along the eastern base of the mountains of Lebanon, where dates and palms grew in abundance, and through which flowed a stream of pure water.

"How is it, Douglas?" asked the Count Raymond, as he reined in his horse to allow the young knight to come to his side. "What disposition do you make of yourself for the coming time?"

"For the present," replied Sir Robert, "I shall abide with Sir Darwin Montrose, our good Earl of Lystra. He has pressed me to make his castle my home."

"Then you are resolved to remain in Palestine?"

"Yes—for a time, at least."
"I had supposed you would be for escaping the aimless trials to which we are now exposed in the Holy Land. Would to Heaven, my dear Douglas, that I could give you such preferment as your merits deserve; but I cannot. My rod of rule is but a broken reed, and my title an empty name."

The count looked behind him, and then added—"Let us push on. I would leave St. Julien out of ear-shot."

The two friends slightly increased their speed; and St. Julien was left in the rear, where he fell into conversation with Pierre Basard.

"Douglas!" spoke Sir Raymond, abruptly, when they had gained a safe distance, "are you fully aware of the dangers that beset the Christian host in Palestine?"

"I think I can see them, sir count."

"But what do you see?"

"I see," replied Douglas, after a moment's hesitation, "that the cause of the Cross is more likely to suffer at the hands of the Christians themselves than from the Infidel enemy."

"Right, Sir Robert. By my halidom! thou art right. But—do you know how deeply the infection is striking in?"

"I have seen signs of general disturbance and distrust," said the young Scot, with a regretful motion of the head.

"Aye," pursued the count; "and general distrust there is. Our Christian rulers have forgotten the cause they came hither to serve, and remember only themselves. They have ceased to look towards the planting of the Cross upon the hills of Jerusalem, and look only for wealth and power. Even Bohemond, our Prince of Antioch, has struck hands with Malek-Adel, and is absolutely making war against those who oppose his assumption of rule over this whole region. He is not content with his principality of Antioch; he is not content that my poor county of Tripoli should be under his shadow; but he would be absolute monarch of all. Of course when such men as Bohemond set the example of treachery, others will follow it; and we may be sure that the disease will grow more and more deadly as it spreads."

"Aye," added Douglas; "and I have been told that even the chiefs themselves are looking towards traitorous alliances with the enemy in the furtherance of selfish ends."

"It is even so," replied Raymond, sadly. "One hardly knows whom to trust. Richard's truce gave but a treacherous quiet. The elements of discord have surged into open anarchy; and not only do our princes war one upon another, but there are those of the lesser warriors of the Cross who have turned brigands. But all this is as nothing compared with the treason which would make secret alliance with the Moslem. In that is the great danger. We are surrounded on all hands by the chiefs of Islam, who are eager to take advantage of our internal dissensions, and ready to strike hands with every recreant Christian who will seek their aid. My own throne of Tripoli is tottering beneath me. Bohemond will not rest until he has taken the country under his rule. Many of the knights whom I had thought to trust have proved false."

The count cast a quick glance behind him, and then continued:

"I believe Jasper St. Julien is a traitor and a villain. In his Castle of Buchala he has received deputations from Damascus, and I think he is in secret alliance with the Saracens."

"I like not the man," said Douglas, emphatically; "and I fully believe that he would stop at no scheme of villany which might answer his own selfish ends."

"By my faith, Sir Robert, you do not misjudge him. He is a dangerous man. His castle is within the limits of the fief of Lystra, and he is a frequent visitor this way. If you are to remain for a time with Montrose, you may have opportunity to watch him, as I understand he is travelling thither."

A dark shadow rested upon Sir Robert's face, and there was token of inward pain; but before he could reply they had reached a place where the stream formed a broad basin at the foot of a mass of rock, and where they dismounted for the refreshment both of themselves and their beasts. They had slaked their thirst, and were upon the point of remounting, when they heard the tramp of horses ahead, and presently a troop of twelve horsemen advanced to view from the northward. They were stout fellows, wearing hauberts of mail, with close-fitting steel capes upon their heads, from the rims of which depended short capes of chain-mail, covering not only the neck, but all of the face save the eyes.

"What have we here?" cried the Count Raymond, removing his velvet cap, and donning his steel helmet.

"As I live," responded Count Robert, donning his casque as the count had done, "I think we have met a troop of the brigands who infest these mountains. I have heard that they lurked hereabouts."

"What ho, there!" shouted Count Raymond, when he had drawn on his gauntlets, and grasped his lance. "Who are ye—friends, or foes?"

The strangers did not immediately reply. They conferred together; and the count again demanded who they were.

"Sir knights," replied he who seemed to be their leader, advancing a horse's length beyond his companions, "we take toll of all who pass this basin?"

"How?—Toll?"

"Yes. Give us all that you have of money and jewels, and you may pass unharmed on your way."

"And if we do not?"

"Then we shall force you;—and, having gone thus far, we may choose to levy upon your rich armour."

"Ah! Say ye so?" cried the count. "Now by our Lady of Lystra, we shall see where the harm will fall!—Sir Robert—Sir Jasper—what say you? Will we pay toll to these fellows?"

"We will pay them toll in steel," answered Douglas.

"A murrain upon the rascals!" growled St. Julien, between his clenched teeth. "They should know better than this. But the result be upon their own heads."

The count turned his head, and saw that his companions were ready; and having poised his lance, he spurred forward, shouting his war-cry:

"Heaven and Saint Malo! Heaven and the right!"

At the first onset one of the robbers went down beneath Raymond's stout lance, and as the head was so fixed in a joint of the outlaw's armour that he could not easily withdraw it, he let go the shaft, and drew his heavy sword. The Scottish knight had chosen his broadsword in the beginning, and with its first blow he clove a steel skull-cap, and split a robber's head.

"By our own Lady of Saint Malo!" cried Raymond, who had seen the blow, "that was bravely done, my Douglas. A few more tithes of toll like that, and the dogs will have had enough."

The fight now became general, and for a while it raged furiously. The three knights were not only better versed in arms than were the brigands, but their compact armour was proof against ordinary cuts and thrusts; while the mail hauberts of the enemy were easily penetrated. But the weight of numbers was fearfully against them. Four of the brigands had fallen, and Pierre Basard had received a cut upon the sword-arm which completely disabled him; so there were now eight to three. Side by side fought Raymond and Douglas, but the press of numbers at length drove them back. The former aimed a blow at the head of a brawny villain who was driving at him, but the sword struck midway upon the edge of the man's iron buckler, and the blade snapped in twain, and on the next instant his opponent's horse reared, and plunged upon him with such force that he was hurled from his saddle.

As soon as Douglas saw the count fall, he drew back his horse. He observed that St. Julien was engaged with a clumsy fellow, and that their sword-play had more the appearance of a friendly bout than of deadly enmity. He was struck painfully with this, and the thought flashed upon him that the knight and the robber were friends; but he had no time then for further reflection. Four of the villains were pressing upon himself, while the other three were gathering around the count, who had just arisen to his feet, and drawn his stout dagger. It was a moment of agony to the young Scot. Between himself and Raymond were four stout foemen, and he could not go to the rescue. He expected to see the noble count struck to earth.

And what a loss would thus fall upon the true and the faithful of the Christians of Palestine!—for Raymond of St. Malo was a chief who knew no guile.

"Down with them! Let the work be finished!" shouted the robber chief.

What the result of the next onset might have been we cannot say; but before another blow had been struck, a battle-cry broke upon the air that was new and strange. Every hand was for the moment stayed, and when the combatants looked up they beheld a powerful knight, mounted upon a charger of magnificent limb and proportion, rushing towards the spot.

"Saint John!" he shouted, as he brought his lance to its rest for attack. His first movement was upon the robber chief, and with a directness and a force that could not be turned aside nor resisted, he drove his spear-head through his cutlass, and bore him to the ground.

This sudden and unexpected presence turned the tide of affairs at once. The unknown knight left his lance fast in the body of the man he had slain, and having drawn his sword he turned upon the three men who had surrounded the count. Two of them went down as beneath the crash of a thunder-bolt, and the third drew back. Raymond seized the sword of one of the fallen brigands, and regained his saddle just in season to see two more men fall beneath the strokes of the mystic knight, while a third was felled by Douglas. He who had been engaged with St. Julien had already fled, and the only remaining robber was glad enough to try the fleetness of his horse for safety.

Our friends now had opportunity to examine their strange ally. He was of massive frame, large and powerful, and of a bearing erect and noble. From head to foot he was clad in red armour—the nicely adjusted plates seeming to be covered with a coat of crimson enamel—and from his ruby crest waved an ostrich feather of the same roseate hue. His visor was closed, and not a feature could be seen. The only relief to all this redness was a Cross of St. John of Jerusalem, in silver, upon his shield.

"Right noble and valiant knight," said Raymond of St. Malo, raising his visor, "thou hast done us brave service. May we not know to whom our thanks are due?"

"You owe me no thanks, sir knights," returned the stranger. "Those villains were the enemies of all true men, and I did but my duty in tilting at them. If you have thanks to give, give them to Heaven."

The Count of Tripoli was filled with admiration of the speech and the bearing of the mysterious knight.

"And yet, fair sir," he urged, "you will let us know who you are."

"Not now. I am a knight; and, I trust, a true one. I am a Christian, and an enemy to all who would betray their divine master. Raymond of Saint

Malo, you have work to do. The true men of Tripoli trust you."

"And they shall not trust in vain!" cried the count, raising his eyes towards heaven. "I have taken the vows of a Christian knight, and I will be faithful thereto; and while I am in Palestine I will not allow a selfish thought to come between me and the duty I owe to the Cross."

"Nobly spoken," responded the Red Knight. "And here let us renew our vows, and swear eternal enmity to all infidels and traitors!"

"I swear!" pronounced Raymond and Douglas in concert.

But Jasper St. Julien opened not his lips. He seized the opportunity to turn to the wounded esquire, and thus he thought to hide himself. But his course was marked, and from that moment Douglas knew him for a recreant knight.

"And you will not show to us your face, nor tell us your name," said the count, eagerly.

"I cannot, without breaking a solemn oath," replied the stranger.

"Then Heaven forbid that I should press you further. But you can tell us whence you come."

"Aye; I am from the mountain of Saint John. We may meet again; and until then Heaven be with you!"

Thus speaking, the mystic knight turned his horse's head and galloped away.

"By my life!" cried Count Raymond, bringing his gauntleted hand down upon his saddle-bow; "I would like to know more of that man."

"I echo your wish, my lord, with all my heart," said the Scot.

Jasper St. Julien said not a word.

Soon afterwards Pierre's wound was cared for, and the party resumed their journey.

CHAPTER II.

THE castle of Sir Darwin Montrose, Earl of Lystra, was situated upon a commanding eminence at the foot of Mount St. John, and on the opposite side of the valley from the mountains of Lebanon. It was within the limits of the district of Tripoli, and near the sources of the streams that watered the plains of Damascus. It was one of the stoutest fortresses in Syria, and had been built after the model of the best castles of the West. The walls were high and thick, with towers at the angles; the battlements, or crenels, were spacious, containing suitable outbuildings; the gates were massive, and well protected and guarded; and the moat was deep and broad. The main tower, or keep, in which was the family residence, was ample and well furnished; and in the principal apartments there was much of taste and elegance. The summit of its highest tower commanded a view of the valley for many miles upon either hand, and it was a beacon to travellers in that direction.

In front of the castle, and not more than a mile distant, was the town of Lystra, mostly inhabited by Christian soldiers, who had laid aside the sword and taken the pruning-hook and the hoe. This had been one of the first settlements established by the followers of the Duke of Normandy, during the first crusade, and here Christians of all nationalities had gathered together, and found a home. Its situation was one of the most beautiful in the Lebanon valley; the soil was rich and productive, and the fruits native to the clime and the region were abundant. There were a number of Syrians—followers of Islam—in the town, but they were friendly and peaceful, and seemed glad to profit by the advantages of the companionship thus afforded.

It was said by those who had been entertained at the Castle of Montrose that a pleasanter abode was not to be found in all England or France. The outlook upon mountain and valley, upon the aspiring crowns of cedar and upon the broad fields of waving grain; upon the groves of dates and palms, of olives and of citrons, and upon the silvery threadings of the limpid streams, afforded to the beholder a scene as varied as it was grand and beautiful.

And there was one other thing to be seen from this point—a thing with which we may have much to do before we are done with our story. In a north-westerly direction from the castle, on the opposite side of the fertile valley, and upon a broad table of rock on the mountain, stood a dark and rugged structure known as the Black Tower. It was of Roman origin, and had once been the chief fortress of the valley; and since the coming of the Crusaders it had been held in turn by the Moslems and by the Christians; but by articles of the truce, when the castle had been allowed to the Christian knight, the Black Tower had been granted to the Emir Marout;

and there he now held rule, with a Mussulman force at command, for the ostensible purpose of affording succour and protection to the sons of Islam who might travel that way.

In an apartment of the castle overlooking the principal court sat a mother and her daughter. The Countess Belinda Montrose, wife of Sir Darwin, was of middle age, and had been accounted one of the most beautiful of those brave and devoted wives who had borne their husbands company to the Holy Land; and she was beautiful still, despite the few lines of silver which had found their way amid her dark tresses—beautiful with that beauty which a disposition ever mild and patient had not suffered to decay nor to grow old.

The daughter was a golden-haired, lovely girl—in every way the fitting representative of a beautiful mother and a noble father. She had seen nineteen years of life, and though most of those years had been passed amid the clang of arms, yet she had been spared the trials which had fallen upon less favoured ones of her sex. She was taller than her mother; with a form of faultless proportions; her wealth of golden hair falling over a neck and shoulders as pure of tint and surface as the rarest alabaster; and the eyes, of an ethereal azure, varying between blue and violet, were warm and radiant with love-light and blessing. None knew her but to love her. The old servants adored her, and the rough, stout men-at-arms of the castle worshipped her and swore by her. She spent much of her time among them, and in her own pleasant way, with sword in hand and buckler upon her arm, she marshalled them, and drilled them, leading them to and fro about the broad courts, from barbarian to postern, they never tiring of obeying orders from her musical lips. She had done it when she was a child for the frolic of the thing; and she did it now that she was older because she found inspiration in it.

The sun was just sinking behind the cedar-crowned summits of Lebanon when the tramp of horses' feet was heard upon the drawbridge, and Isabel Montrose went to a window and looked out.

"Who is it, my child?" asked the countess.

"I see four horsemen, mother; but the shadow of the barbed rests upon their faces."

"Are they knights?"

"Three of them are knights. Ah—I can see them more plainly now. Oh!"

"Why that exclamation, Isabel?"

"Jasper St. Julien is among them," the maiden replied, with a shudder. "I wish he would not come here."

"Not come to our castle? And wherefore, my child?"

"Because I do not like him. I doubt him."

"Be circumspect and guarded, my child. It were not well to accuse a man until you know your grounds."

"I have not accused Jasper St. Julien. I have only said that I did not like him. He has an evil eye, and a dark spirit seems ever lurking and brooding beneath his contracted brow. And I do not like the familiar manner of his address."

"And yet he aims, no doubt, to please you. But, have you recognised none of the others?"

The maiden either did not understand the question, or she hesitated to answer. She had seen one more face which she surely knew, and she trembled with a great heart-throb when she had made the discovery.

The Lady Belinda waited no longer, but came to the window herself, reaching it just as the last of the horsemen rode out into the open court.

"Now may the fates be blessed that have brought us that noble knight!" she cried, as she recognised one of the cavaliers.

"You mean the young knight, mother?"

"Aye,—he is still young, though he has been these fifteen years a knight. I allude to our right gallant Count of Tripoli."

"How?" exclaimed Isabel, eagerly. "Is it in truth Count Raymond?"

"Aye,—I know his device—the Dragon of Saint Malo."

"Oh, I am glad he has come. I have not seen him since I was a little child; but I have heard wondrous things of him. And he is the ruler of Tripoli?"

"By right he should be; though I have heard that the Prince of Antioch is seeking to circumscribe his power. But there is a younger knight still," continued the countess, raising her hand above her eyes. "See,—the one who rides by the count's side. I cannot see the device upon his shield. Can you see it, Isabel?"

"I see no device; but I think I know the face," replied the maiden, with a tremor which was too palpable to pass unnoticed.

"What ails thee, child? Is the youth another knight whom you dislike?"

"Not so, my mother," answered Isabel, with kindling eye. "It is our right noble Marquis of Doon."

"How?" cried the countess, joyfully. "Is it indeed young Douglas? Dear, good Robert! Ah! he is a knight now, and I cannot fondle him as I did when he was a boy. I could almost wish that he might have remained a boy."

"Why such a wish, mother?"

"That I might still have had him for a child."

"And can you not love him all the same now that he is a brave and gallant knight? For my part, I—"

"What! trembling again? Have a care, my daughter! But come; we must go and bid them welcome in your father's absence."

Thus speaking the countess led the way to the great hall; and shortly afterwards the visitors were ushered into her presence.

"Noble lady," said the Count Raymond, advancing to salute his hostess, "allow me to hope that we do not intrude."

"You are at home here, as in your own castle," replied Belinda.

The count raised her hand to his lips, and then turned towards Isabel.

"And this fair lady?"

"Is my daughter Isabel."

She led the maiden forward, and presented her to the count.

"I remember you," said Raymond, holding the fair white hand, "though changes have come since last we met. Allow me to greet you as a friend, and to bestow a blessing upon you."

He raised the hand to his lips, and his dark eyes beamed and warmed as he gazed upon the matchless beauty of her face. But quickly recollecting himself he turned to his followers.

"The brave knights who bear me company should be known to you, gentle lady. Here is Jasper St. Julien, of Buchala; and here is Robert Douglas. Sir Robert informs me that he has not seen you until now since he received, at the hand of Richard, his noble degree of knighthood; so you will allow me to present him—Sir Robert Douglas, ladies, and a braver knight, or one more true, you will not find!"

"My dear, dear Robert!" cried the countess, seeming to forget the brave warrior, and to remember only the motherless boy whom she had cared for and loved in the other years.

The simple words, with their hearty expression, were things of joy to the youthful knight; and his blue eyes moistened as he replied to the motherly salutation. Then he turned to Isabel, who trembled while she smiled, and the flush of whose cheek was answered by the liquid light of the clear azure eyes.

"And you, lady?" he said, taking her hand; "you, too, will you bid me welcome after my long absence?"

"I deem my mother a woman of judgment, sir knight; and since she welcomes you so cordially, I shall do likewise." The words were spoken soberly, but there was a lurking smile about the restrained lips, and a warm sparkle of the eyes, which told of deeper feelings underlying.

Jasper St. Julien had thus far stood apart, watching with eager gaze the reception of Douglas. In turn he advanced and saluted the countess, and as he turned to Isabel, he said:

"I shall not ask if I am welcome, for I know it must be so. You will not dispel the happy conceit?"

"Far be it from me, Sir Jasper, to dispel happiness of any kind," replied the maiden. And then she added, with something of constraint in her manner: "A happiness with foundation of error must sooner or later dispel itself."

St. Julien smiled, and nodded an assent; but there was an evil look upon his face the while. He saw Isabel turn again towards the young Scot, and his features were worked upon by an emotion which gave him the scowl of a demon.

"And now," said Raymond, "where is our good earl?"

"He cannot be far away," answered the countess, "and will surely return this evening. He sent Bertram at noon with that message." "Bertram?"

"Aye, Sir Robert," responded Belinda. "Bertram was a boy with you. He is now my husband's esquire, and will surely be a knight if he lives."

The words of the hostess were broken in upon by the winding of the horn at the gate; and ere long afterward the earl entered the hall. He was a man of right noble presence, wearing his fifty years with the lightness and vigour of youth, albeit there were lines of silver gleaming here and there amid his raven locks. His brow was broad, full, and open; his eyes large and dark; and his lower features handsome with good looks and good nature.

"How now?" he cried, his eye resting first upon the count, at the same time starting forward and extending his hand. "Is it in truth our noble lord of St. Malo? By my life, good Raymond, thou art a thousand times welcome."

"I can only hope," returned the count, warmly, "that I am as welcome as I am happy in thus meeting yourself once more, my friend tried and true."

Sir Darwin then greeted St. Julien, frankly and kindly, but with more of politeness than he was wont to extend to those whom he esteemed. Next he turned to the youthful knight, and when he had recognised him, his eyes flashed with a warmer glow, and he extended both his hands, exclaiming, as he did so:

"Robert! my dear boy! Heaven bless you!" and he shook him with the strength and ardour of a great love.

The earl wore no armour, as he had just come in from the village, where his business had been of a pacific character, and where all honest men were his friends. When the greetings had been exchanged the visitors laid aside their trappings of war, and were shortly afterwards ushered into the banquetting-hall, where the evening repast had been laid.

Jasper St. Julien, of his own accord, and all unbidden, led Isabel to the board, and secured a seat at her side; and when Douglas saw how attentive he was, a cloud darkened his brow. But the Scot was not long in discovering that the fair girl was ill at ease, and the cloud passed away.

"Sir Darwin," said the count, after other matters had been discussed, "you have graceless neighbours among these mountains. Not many miles from here we were attacked by a band of rascals who thought to rob us."

"Ah!" exclaimed the earl, with a lowering brow. "Have those villains broken loose again? What manner of men were they?"

"They were stout fellows, wearing steel caps and hauberts of mail, and spoke in the *lingua Franca* which has been adopted for communication with the Infidels," replied Count Raymond.

"The same," said the host. "They have never molested me, but I have heard of them often. They have a lurking-place somewhere in the mountains, and their robberies have been bold and indiscriminate. They are evidently recreant Christians, and are thus the more dangerous."

"And you have one other neighbour of whom I should like much to know," resumed the count. "I allude to a stout, mystic knight, who wears a full suit of blood-red armour, with the Cross of St. John of Jerusalem upon his shield, and who persists in keeping his visor down. Can you tell us of him?"

"Only that he is a strange and wonderful man," returned Sir Darwin, solemnly. "I have met him, but I never saw his face. He claims that his abiding-place is upon Mount St. John. I know that he is brave and strong, and I think he is true and loyal. But where did you meet him, and when?"

"This very day, while we were in conflict with the robbers. They were twelve to us four. We had slain a number equal to our own, when my esquire became disabled; my own sword was broken, and myself unhorsed; eight of the villains were upon us, pushing us nigh to death, when this knight of the blood-red armour appeared on the scene. His arm was like a mighty torrent. The robbers were scattered like chaff. When he had saved us, I asked him his name, but he would not give it; nor would he raise his visor. He said he was bound by an oath. He has given me the same reason," said Montrose.

"But," urged Raymond, "have you not been able to form any conjecture concerning his real character?"

"I have thought," replied the host, "that he might be one of the Christian princes supposed to have returned to the West, a secret agent of the Cross, engaged by vow, to watch the interests of the Christians. Richard of England prophesied, ere he left these shores, that there would be found traitors in the Christian host; and he may have left an agent to keep watch and ward. If the Red Knight is such an agent, be sure he will prove true to the interests left in his hands."

As further discussion failed to elicit anything clear concerning the mystic knight, the conversation of the evening at length took a general turn.

(To be continued.)

ABSENCE.

I AM not lonely, oh, my Love!
Save in so far I have not thee,
Without whose smile the changeful days
Are all alike to me.

Yet while the Winter blooms to Spring,
And Summer doth to Autumn wane,
I will not say their various wealth
Is lavished forth in vain.

Since Nature hath November days,
Wherein she broods on future flowers,
We may not put less noble use
To any time of ours.

Their own soft lights and tender glooms
To poets' eye and poets' ear,
Hath every feeling of the heart,
And season of the year.

Ah! pondering on the hours I gain,
And counting up the hours I lose,
I find them both so full of love,
I scarce know which to choose.

With thee the joy is almost pain,
And swift the days fleet by;
I find thee not in sight more dear,
Nor less in absence nigh.

D. R. P.

FACETIÆ.

A FOR of a fellow who was sauntering about a country village, saw a pretty face at the window of a house, near which a little boy was at play. "Boy," said he, "who is that fair lady looking out?" "My sister," was the laconic reply. "Will you tell me if she is a spinster or a matron?" asked the exquisite. "She's a tailorress," answered the lad, resuming his play.

PIETY AND MORALITY.

The following advertisement appeared recently in a daily paper:

"Wanted, in a house of business in the city, a young man to wait at table, &c. He should be pious, but must be moral. Address, stating qualifications and wages, to A. B."

SPORT AND GAME.—There is something in the argument that, as pheasants and other game have come to be bred and fed like domestic poultry and live stock, they should now by statute be declared to have ceased to be *fera natura*, and to have become property. To abate the prejudice which objects to this proposal, perhaps, as the slaughter of tame animals is no sport, the landed poultryers will discontinue shooting.—*Punch*.

"I EXCUSED HER."

A simple fellow once said of a famous beauty, "I could have courted and married her easy enough, if I'd wanted to."

"And, pray, why didn't you?" asked his friend. "Oh, when I began to court her, you see, she took me on one side and politely asked to be excused, and so I excused her."

A DISAPPOINTED BIRD.—A certain genial bald-headed gentleman, while in Paris one day, went to the Zoological Gardens. The weather was warm, and he lay down on a bench. Presently he fell asleep, and he was aroused by a strange feeling of warmth on the head. An infatuated ostrich had come along, and mistaking his entirely bald head for an egg, settled down with a resolute determination to hatch it, or sit for ever. Our friend yelled for help until a keeper came, and led the disappointed and regretful ostrich away to its cage.

CELESTIAL SAYINGS.—Those satirical roughs, the Celestials—who, by the way, are not quite so chivalrous as we "outside barbarians," treating their women, in fact, in a most shameful and barbarous manner—say many bitter things of the "fair flowers of creation," of which the following may serve as specimens:—To cultivate virtue is the science of men; to renounce science is the virtue of women. You must listen to your wife and not believe her. If one is not dead or stupid, what a position is that of a father-in-law! If with a wife and daughter-in-law, one has also sisters and sisters-in-law, daughters, and nieces, one ought to be a tiger to hold aught. The happiest mother of daughters is she who has only sons. The minds of women are of quicksilver, and their hearts of wax. The most curious women willingly cast down their eyes to be looked at. The tongues of women increase by all that they take from their feet. The finest roads do not go far. When men are together, they listen to one another; but women and girls look at one another. The most timid girl has courage enough to talk scandal.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MARTHA JANE.—A pretty light brown colour, P. M.—Under the circumstances, no.

FREDERICK C.—Declined, with thanks for your trouble. Your effort is the product of some industry, much enthusiasm, little taste, and less judgment.

ANTIQUARY.—The derivation of the word "coin" confirms the fact, otherwise established, that pieces of money were at one time made square or rather with "corners," not round in accordance with the present fashion.

L. T. A.—Brevet is the term applied in certain cases to an officer's promotion. It is a commission which confers upon an officer a degree of rank next above that which he holds in his regiment without giving him any additional pay. The term does not apply to the navy.

NUNNER KINNEY.—It has been decided by a court of law that club-houses have no legal character similar to joint stock enterprises or ordinary partnerships, and that therefore the members of such societies are not liable for the acts of their secretaries, stewards, or committees.

M. C. A. T.—Nature will befriend you if you will give nature a chance. Cold water, plain but nourishing diet, and early rising, will be serviceable. But in addition to these you require resolution to be true to your own sense of what is right.

LILY.—The gloves can be cleaned with spirits of turpentine applied with a small sponge. During the application the glove should be upon the hand as it is usually worn. Afterwards, hang the glove in a current of air until the odour of the turpentine has passed away.

D. Y.—There are some ruins of castles to be seen in many parts of England, but very few castles proper now exist. Most of them were demolished when the wars of the Roses spread desolation through the land between the years 1455 and 1471. About three hundred years before this time, when the power of the great feudal barons was at its height, there were upwards of a thousand strongly-fortified castles in England.

VIDE.—Without presuming to give you a list of the best books on the subjects referred to, we can vouch for the high character borne by the following: De Morgan's "Elements of Arithmetic," De Morgan's "Elements of Algebra," Walker's "English Pronouncing Dictionary," Dr. Morell's "English Grammar," Archdeacon's Smith's "Collection of Synonyms," and Nugent's "Pocket French Dictionary."

MAGGIE MAY.—A good black hair dye can be made by boiling down senna leaves. After straining add a little bi-carbonate of ammonia, say a dram to a pint of the fluid. The stains on the linen may be removed by a solution of pearlash, apply it as hot as possible. You write very nicely. We suppose that you received the double nut you allude to from a bashful young man. It is his method of popping the question. He is partial to allegories. He meant to say that he wished you to marry him. Young ladies should not understand such a roundabout young man.

S. S. S.—You must join the force by entering the ranks, and then endeavour to obtain promotion by attention to your duty. A medical examination of your physique is we believe the principal qualification. There is no educational test beyond what can be satisfied by a very ordinary knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. By a recent regulation the salaries of members of the police force have been raised. Inspectors now receive 50s. per week; first class sergeants, 31s.; second class, 29s.; first class constables, 26s.; second class, 24s.; third class, 22s.; and fourth class, 20s.

C. M. E.—No flower has its proper colour until it is fully expanded. If, therefore, the umpire who decided to which plant the prize should be awarded based his judgment upon richness of colour, as you admit it was his business to do, he of necessity passed over your contribution because the buds had not burst into bloom. There are many flowers which possess great luxuriance of colour when blown, which are yet white in the bud. We quite coincide with your remarks upon the pleasantness and advantages of flower-shows in which the amateur gardeners of the locality are exhibitors.

JANE.—It is possible to calculate what is called the distance of the storm by the interval that elapses between the beholding of the flash of lightning and the hearing of the thunder-clap. The flash of lightning and the report of the thunder take place in reality at the same moment, but since sound takes a longer time to travel than light in the proportion of eleven hundred feet per second, the distance of the thunder-cloud from the observer may be calculated by counting the number of seconds which elapse between the time of seeing the

flash and hearing the report, and then multiplying that number of seconds by the eleven hundred feet above referred to. The lightning by its great heat creates a partial vacuum in the atmosphere, and the sudden rushing of air into the void space produces the sound of thunder. Various reasons have been assigned for the prolongation of the sound, and about them scientific men do not quite agree.

MILADY.—The postal authorities have not yet completed their arrangements about the Halfpenny Card postage, which does not come into operation till October next. The general features of the plan are that the cards shall be of a limited size, and pass through the post open to the inspection of all. They may perhaps lead to short business communications being transmitted in cypher, and will probably be extensively used by advertisers in the place of circulars. At present it is difficult to conceive that the public will like even trivial business matters to be published to the world.

YAN.—We believe that the four largest organs in England are—the monster organ at the Crystal Palace; the organ at St. George's Hall, Liverpool; that at York Minster; and that in Christchurch, Newgate Street. The latter has above 4,000 pipes; but the York Cathedral organ contains in the great manual alone 4,818 pipes—to these must be added the pipes of the swelling organ 1,566, the pipes of the choir organ 1,399, and the pipes of the pedal organ 200, making a total of 8,063 pipes. This organ has also eighty stops, and eight bellows. The longest pipe is 32 feet long, through which a current of air to produce a sound must rush with the force of a tempest. We should be glad if any of our correspondents could send us similar particulars of the Crystal Palace and Liverpool organs.

A. N. A.—It would be advisable for you to change your place of abode. The importance of a well-ventilated bedroom cannot be exaggerated. Every person draws into his system a portion of the surrounding atmosphere and returns it, after a change within the body, mixed with a poison. About a thousand grains by weight of this poisonous ingredient are added to the air of a bedroom in a night by a single sleeper, and unless ventilation provide for a gradual removal of foul air and the introduction of fresh, the health must suffer. With more air you will probably get more light, which will have a cheering influence over your spirits. Do not forget the daily morning bath. By adopting these means, your health will very likely be soon restored to a better condition.

BETTER LUCK ANOTHER YEAR.

Oh! never sink 'neath Fortune's frown,
But brave her with a shout of cheer,
And front her fairly—face her down—
She's only stern to those who fear!
Here's "better luck another year!"
Another year!

Aye, better luck another year!
We'll have her smile instead of wile—
A thousand smiles for every tear,
With home made glad and goodly cheer,
And better luck another year—
Another year!

The damsel Fortune still dones
The plea that yet delights her ear;
"Tis but our mawkish that she tries,
She's coy to those who doubt and fear;
She'll grant the suit another year—
Another year!

Here's "better luck another year!"
She nee doth seek the gold prize;
But spite of frown and scorn and sneer,
Be firm, and we will win and cheer,
With home made glad and goodly cheer,
In better luck another year—
Another year! another year!
W. G. S.

HOUSEHOLDER.—It is not lawful for a chimney-sweeper to take any boy as apprentice to his trade who is under the age of sixteen years; and he is liable to a penalty if he compels, or knowingly allows, any person under the age of twenty-one years to ascend or descend a chimney for the purpose either of cleaning or extinguishing a fire.

C. N. L.—A carat is a measure of weight by which the fineness of gold is often estimated. Twenty-four carats are assigned to an ounce. When an article of jewellery is made of gold, of which the component parts are nine carats of pure gold and fifteen of alloy, it is said to be only nine carat gold. An expression which signifies that the intrinsic value of the article is much below its apparent value.

JEROSOPHAT.—For a history of the invention of playing cards you must dive deep into the early Chinese and Hindu records. These cards were known in Europe at the end of the fourteenth century, having served to amuse Charles IV., King of France, during a severe attack of melancholy. At the present day the number and nature of the cards in each pack vary in different countries. In England the games at present in fashion are whist, loo, piquet, vingt-et-un, cribbage, and the newly-invented game of besique.

C. P. O.—The copyright of a book or map or piece of music endures for the natural life of the author and for a further term of seven years from his death; but if the term of seven years shall expire before the end of forty-two years from the first publication, the copyright shall still endure for such period of forty-two years, and the copyright of a book published for the first time after the death of its author shall endure for forty-two years from the date of its first publication. Unless it is otherwise agreed, the copyright of magazine articles belongs to the proprietor of the magazine, if such proprietor has paid the author. The proprietor is entitled to the copyright of his magazine for forty-two years; but after the term of twenty-eight years from the first publication of a contributor's article, the right of publishing the same in a separate form reverts to the author for the remaining fourteen years of the copyright term.

JAS. C.—Arithmetic is a branch of mathematics, and useful not only for the facility in commercial transac-

tions which a thorough knowledge of it gives, but also as a mental exercise by which the wits can be sharpened. A person unused to calculations would hardly suppose that the number of ways that eight persons can be seated at a round table, so that all shall not have the same neighbours in any two arrangements, is no less than five thousand and forty.

DOR, twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, affectionate, good tempered, and a lover of singing and home. Respondent must be fair, medium height, good tempered, and loving.

SWEET BRIAR, twenty, medium height, fair, good tempered, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be affectionate, dark, tall, good looking, and have nice whiskers.

J. N., tall, fair, can play the piano, the flute, can sing, and has good prospects. Respondent must be pretty, loving, and forward her carte.

HAPPY JACK, twenty-two, 5ft. 4in., dark, loving, and a seaman in the R.N. Respondent must be about three years his junior, domesticated, and resident in Portsmouth.

M. H. J., handsome, fair, and in a good position. Respondent must be under twenty, pretty, well educated, and of a very lively disposition.

F. F., nineteen, 5ft. 6in., dark hair and eyes, and a lawyer's clerk in receipt of good wages. Respondent must be fair, of medium height, homely, good tempered, and fond of music.

USHAFT, twenty-eight, 5ft. 8in., good looking, has a comfortable income, and good expectations. Respondent must be good looking, and able to make home comfortable.

COGGED RACE and TRAINING WINCH (seaman, R.N.).—"Cogged Racer," twenty-four, medium height, and dark complexion. "Training Winch," twenty-two, medium height, light complexion, and gray eyes. Respondents must be fond of home, loving, and domesticated.

BEATRICE, eighteen, medium height, light brown wavy hair, dark blue eyes, good complexion, pretty, and accomplished in music and singing. Respondents must be handsome; musicians and artists preferred.

THREE BRITISH TARS.—"Young Bill," twenty-two, 5ft. 11in., fair, good looking, affectionate, and fond of home. Respondent must be fair, and fond of music. "Younger Bill," twenty, 5ft. 8in., and dark. Respondent must be fond of singing, and good tempered. "Spanker Jack," twenty-one, fair, good tempered, and fond of dancing. Respondent must be fond of singing, and fond of home.

C. C., twenty, 5ft. 8in., fair hair, blue eyes, and a mechanic in constant employment. Respondent must be about the same height, dark, pretty, good tempered, and fond of music; a lady resident in Brompton preferred.

EVELYN and LILY.—"Evelyn," seventeen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, loving, cheerful, and domesticated. "Lily," twenty, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes, rosy complexion, affectionate, domesticated, and good looking. Respondent must be tall, dark, and affectionate.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LAURETTA by—"Adolphus," twenty, fond of home, and good tempered.

KATIE E. by—"N. E. H.," twenty-seven, 5ft. 6in., fair, and at present quartered in Gibraltar.

H. A. A. by—"Annie," nineteen, short, fair, loving, and fond of home.

FRILLO by—"Adela," medium height, good looking, pretty hazel eyes, brown hair, amiable, affectionate, and educated.

E. J. V. by—"Nellie," tall, dark, good looking, fond of music, and has money.

G. D. by—"Florence," medium height, gentle, fair, amiable, loving, domesticated, and fond of home.

A. B. by—"Nora," nineteen, tall, fair, accomplished, and affectionate.

ZILLA by—"F. B. N.," twenty-three, 5ft. 9in., dark, fond of music, and in receipt of an income of 200l. a year.

MARGUERITE by—"Algernon," twenty-two, medium height, dark, fond of home, and in a good position;—"Josephus," twenty-one, 5ft. 6in., fair, good looking, amiable, and with good expectations; and—"Will R.," twenty-three, 5ft. 10in., affectionate, dark, and has 1500l. per annum.

BELUSH by—"C. E. G.," twenty-seven, 5ft. 9in., dark, good tempered, fond of home and its comforts, and not afraid of work.

AGNES by—"Young England," tall, dark, loving, good tempered, fond of home, and a tradesman.

AUBREY by—"Angela," tall, good looking, a brunette, brown hair and eyes, amiable, intelligent, affectionate, and can play the piano and sing; and—"Emily," nineteen, dark, tall, domesticated, and with an income of 300l. a year.

F. B. wishes "Ethel H." to forward her carte and make an appointment.

EMILY wishes to hear from "E. F. S.," who responded to her.

MOSS ROSK wishes for "F. M. G.'s" carte.

ALICE EMILY wishes for "F. B.'s" carte.

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